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Balzac
The house of the cat
and racket

CENTRAL

Honoré de Balzac

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

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The Human Comedy

PRIVATE LIFE

VOLUME I

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M. GUILLAUME AND THÉODORE

But, at this moment, the old draper paid no attention to his apprentices; he was busily studying the motive of the anxiety with which the young man in the cloak and silk socks alternately surveyed his signboard and the recesses of his shop.

The *Edition Définitive* of the *Comédie Humaine* by HONORÉ DE BALZAC, now for the first time completely translated into English.

THE HOUSE OF THE CAT AND RACKET. THE DANCE AT SCEAUX. THE PURSE. THE VENDETTA. IN ONE VOLUME. TRANSLATED BY MAY TOMLINSON, AND ILLUSTRATED WITH FOUR ETCHINGS.

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THE
HOUSE OF THE CAT AND RACKET

TO MADEMOISELLE MARIE DE MONTHEAU

THE HOUSE OF THE CAT AND RACKET

*

In the middle of Rue Saint-Denis, almost at the corner of Rue du Petit-Lion, there existed but lately, one of those houses so valuable to the historian, in facilitating his task of reconstructing ancient Paris by analogy.

The tottering walls of this dilapidated house seemed to have been checkered with hieroglyphics. What better name could the chance observer give to the X and V, traced upon the façade by transversal or diagonal pieces of wood, indicated in the whitewash by narrow parallel crevices?

The lightest carriage in passing by evidently shook every rafter in its mortice.

This venerable edifice was surmounted by a triangular roof whose like will soon become extinct in Paris. Distorted by the inclemency of the Parisian climate this roof projected three feet over the road, as much to screen the threshold of the door from rain as to shelter the wall of an attic, and its window without a sill. This last story was built of planks nailed one over the other like slates, doubtless to prevent the overburdening of this fragile structure.

One rainy morning in March, a young man, carefully wrapt in his cloak, stood under the porch of a

shop opposite this old house, examining it with the enthusiasm of an archæologist. And certainly this fragment of the Sixteenth Century bourgeoisie presented to an observer more than one problem. Each story had some peculiarity; the ground-floor had four long, narrow windows, close together, the lower parts crossed by squares of wood in order to produce the doubtful light by the help of which the materials of a clever tradesman assume the colors desired by his customers. The young man seemed indifferent to this essential part of the house, he did not even appear to notice it. The windows of the second story above, with their raised blinds showing little red muslin curtains through large panes of Bohemian glass, had still less interest for him. His attention was wholly centred in the humble windows of the third story, in the modest windows whose rudely fashioned woodwork deserved a place in the Conservatoire of Arts and Trades, as a specimen of the primitive efforts of French joinery. So green were the little panes of these windows that had it not been for his excellent eyesight, the young man would not have been able to discern the linen curtains, with their pattern of blue squares, that hid the mysteries of this room from the eyes of the profane. But tired of his profitless contemplation, or of the silence in which the house, as well as the whole neighborhood, was wrapt, the watcher every now and then bent his gaze upon the lower regions. An involuntary smile played upon his lips each time he looked at the

shop, where, in fact, features sufficiently amusing might be seen. A tremendous piece of wood, horizontally supported by four posts that were apparently bent by the weight of this decrepit old house, had been adorned with as many layers of paint as the cheek of an old duchess is covered with rouge. In the middle of this delicately-carved beam was an old picture representing a cat playing at ball. It was this canvas that roused the young man's mirth. But it must be confessed that the most intelligent of modern painters could not have originated a more comical caricature. In one of his front paws the animal was holding a racket as big as himself, he was standing up on his hind legs to aim at an enormous ball returned to him by a gentleman in an embroidered coat. Design, color and accessories, all combined to suggest that the artist wished to mock at the tradesman and the passers-by.

This picture had become still more ludicrous owing to the modifications made by time, which rendered the outlines so uncertain as to greatly puzzle the unconscious idler. Thus the cat's spotted tail stood out in such a way that it might have been taken for a spectator. So big, erect and thick were the tails of our ancestors' cats.

To the right of the picture, upon an azure ground that only imperfectly disguised the rottenness of the wood, passers-by might read: GUILLAUME, and to the left: SUCCESSOR TO THE SIEUR CHEVREL. The sun and rain had worn away most of the gold so sparingly applied to the letters of this inscription,

in which the letter U took the place of V and vice versa, according to the rules of our ancient orthography. In order to humble the pride of those who believe that the world grows daily more intelligent and that modern charlatanism surpasses everything, it is as well to here observe that these signboards, whose etymology appears strange to more than one Parisian tradesman, are dead pictures of living pictures by which our rogues of ancestors succeeded in attracting customers to their shops. Thus the *Spinning Sow*, the *Green Monkey*, etc., were animals in cages, whose cleverness was the astonishment of passers-by, and whose training testified to the patience of the Fifteenth Century industrial. Such curiosities enriched their lucky owners more quickly than the *Providence*, the *Good Faith*, the *Grace of God*, and the *Beheading of John the Baptist* that are still to be seen in Rue Saint-Denis. However, the stranger most assuredly was not staying there to admire the cat, that one moment's attention sufficed to engrave upon the memory. This young man also had his peculiarities. The classic folds of his cloak revealed his elegantly shod feet, which were all the more conspicuous in the depths of the Paris mud, on account of the white silk socks whose spattered condition testified to his impatience. No doubt he came from a wedding or ball, for at this early hour he held a pair of white gloves, and his uncurled black locks, scattered over his shoulders, indicated a coiffure after the style of Caracalla, brought into fashion not less by the school of David, than by the

infatuation for Greek and Roman customs that marked the early years of this century. Despite the noise caused by several belated market gardeners galloping past to the great market there was a magic in the quiet of this usually busy street that is known to those only who have wandered through deserted Paris at those times when her uproar, lulled for a space, revives and murmurs in the distance like the great voice of the sea. This young stranger must have appeared as peculiar to the tradesman of the *Cat and Racket* as the *Cat and Racket* did to him. A dazzling white tie caused his anxious face to appear paler than it really was. The alternately gloomy and eager light flashing in his black eyes harmonized with the strange outlines of his face, and with his large and sinuous mouth, which contracted when he smiled. His forehead was wrinkled as if under the influence of some strong annoyance and bore a somewhat terrible expression. Is not the brow the most prophetic feature in man? When distorted by anger, there was something almost terrifying in the force with which the lines gathered in the stranger's forehead; but when it recovered its easily disturbed composure, it wore the bright charm that formed the attraction of this physiognomy, in which joy, pain, love, anger and scorn were expressed in so speaking a manner that the most cold-blooded man must have been moved by it. When the attic window was hastily opened, the unknown was so thoroughly out of temper that he did not see three

merry faces, all round, pink and white, as much alike as the figures of Commerce carved on certain monuments. These three faces, framed by the window, recalled the chubby angel heads pictured as scattered in the clouds around the Almighty. The apprentices inhaled the emanations from the street with an avidity that testified to the hot and vitiated atmosphere of their garret. After pointing to the strange looking sentinel, the clerk who seemed the merriest of the three, disappeared, and presently returned holding a stiff metal instrument which has lately been superseded by the more supple strop; then, maliciously watching the idler they sprinkled him with a fine whitish shower which, from its perfume, showed that the three chins had just been shaved. Retreating on tiptoe to the back of their attic to enjoy their victim's rage, the clerks stopped laughing when they saw the careless scorn with which the young man shook his cloak, and the profound contempt depicted in his face as he lifted his eyes to the empty window. At this moment, a white and delicate hand raised toward the moulding the lower part of one of the rough windows in the third story by means of those cords whose pulley often drops the heavy frame it is meant to support. The loafer was then rewarded for his long waiting. The face of a young girl appeared, fresh as one of those lilies that flower upon the bosom of the waters, crowned by a ruche of rumpled muslin that gave her head a wonderfully innocent look. Although clothed in some dark material her

neck and shoulders could be seen, thanks to some slight openings which her movements during sleep had made. No expression of constraint could alter the ingenuity of this face or the serenity of eyes forever immortalized in Raphael's sublime compositions; there was the same grace, the same tranquillity as that of the proverbial Madonna. The youthful cheeks, upon which slumber had laid, as it were, a superabundance of life, made a charming contrast to the massive old window with its rough outlines and blackened sill. The young girl, barely awake, rested her blue eyes on the neighboring roofs and looked up at the sky like those flowers that morning finds with petals still unfurled; then, from force of habit she lowered them to the dingy regions of the street, where they promptly encountered those of her adorer; coquettishly ashamed of being seen *en déshabillé*, she hastily withdrew, the worn-out pulley revolved, the window fell with a rapidity that within our days has gained an invidious reputation for our ancestors' simple invention, and the vision disappeared.

It seemed to the young man as if the brightest morning star had been hidden by a cloud.

During these little incidents the heavy inside shutters protecting the thin panes of the shop of the *Cat and Racket,* had been removed as if by magic. The old, knockered door was thrown back against the inner wall of the house by a servant who was probably a contemporary of the signboard, to which, with a shaky hand, he fastened a square

cloth embroidered in yellow silk with the name GUILLAUME, SUCCESSOR TO CHEVREL. It would have puzzled more than one passer-by to guess the nature of Monsieur Guillaume's trade.

The great iron bars protecting the exterior of the shop prevented a good view of the brown linen packets that were as numerous as herrings in the ocean. In spite of the apparent simplicity of this Gothic front, Monsieur Guillaume's shops were the best stocked of all the merchant drapers in Paris, he had the most extensive connections, and his commercial honesty was above the least suspicion. If any of his fellow tradesmen concluded a bargain with the government without having the required quantity of cloth, he was always ready to supply them, no matter how great the number of pieces tendered for. The wily merchant knew a thousand ways of accruing the greatest profit without being obliged, as they were, to have recourse to patrons, to practise mean tricks, or give rich presents.

If his fellow tradesmen could only repay him in safe long-dated drafts, he would refer them to his notary as being an accommodating man, for he knew how to get a double profit out of the transaction, thanks to the expedient that gave rise to the proverbial saying amongst the tradesmen of Rue Saint-Denis, "God preserve you from Monsieur Guillaume's notary!" as indicating a heavy discount. As the servant retired the old merchant appeared, as if by some miracle, upon the threshold of his shop.

Monsieur Guillaume surveyed the Rue Saint-

Denis, the neighboring shops and the weather, with the interest of a man landing at Havre and seeing France again after a long journey.

Duly convinced that nothing had changed during his sleep, he then perceived the stranger on guard, who, on his side, contemplated the patriarchal draper, just as Humboldt might have examined the first electric gymnotus that he saw in America. Monsieur Guillaume wore wide black velvet breeches, variegated stockings and square-toe shoes with silver buckles. His slightly bent body was incased in a square-tail coat, of a greenish cloth, with square flaps and a square collar, trimmed with big white metal buttons, reddened with wear. His gray hair was so precisely flattened and combed on his yellow skull that it looked like a furrowed field. His little green eyes, like gimlet holes, shone beneath two arches outlined by a slight redness in the place of eyebrows.

Anxiety had traced as many horizontal wrinkles on his forehead as there were creases in his coat. The sallow face indicated patience, commercial prudence and that species of sly cupidity required in business. At that time it was no such rare thing as it is now-a-days, to see these old families preserving, like precious traditions, the customs and dress peculiar to their calling, and who dwelling in the midst of modern civilization are like the antediluvian remains discovered in quarries by Cuvier. The head of the Guillaume family was one of these remarkable guardians of ancient customs; he was

often caught regretting the "Mayors of Paris;" and he never spoke of a decision of the Commercial Court of Justice but as a *Sentence of the Consuls*. Being the first of his household to rise, no doubt in virtue of these practises, he was resolutely awaiting the arrival of his three clerks in order to scold them should they be late. These young disciples of Mercury dreaded nothing so much as the silent activity with which, on Monday morning, the master scrutinized their faces and movements, seeking evidences or traces of their escapades. But, at this moment, the old draper paid no attention to his apprentices; he was busily studying the motive of the anxiety with which the young man in the cloak and silk socks alternately surveyed his signboard and the recesses of his shop.

The growing daylight showed up the wired office hung round with old green silk curtains, where were kept the huge day-books, dumb oracles of the house. The inquisitive stranger seemed to be gloating over the little place, and to be taking a plan of the side dining-room, lighted by a skylight whence the assembled family, during meals, could easily see the slightest accident that might occur on the threshold of the shop. So great an affection for his house appeared suspicious to a merchant who had suffered the administration of the *Maximum.** Monsieur Guillaume naturally imagined that this sinister figure had designs upon the till of the *Cat and*

*The Convention of 1793 passed a law ordaining that merchants should not exceed a fixed price in selling the necessities of life.

Racket. After a discreet enjoyment of the silent duel going on between his master and the stranger, the oldest of the clerks, seeing the young man stealthily eyeing the windows of the third story, ventured to stand on the same flagstone as Monsieur Guillaume. He took two steps into the street, lifted his head, and fancied he saw Mademoiselle Augustine retiring precipitately. Displeased at the perspicacity of his head clerk, the draper looked askant at him; but, all of a sudden, the mutual apprehensions excited by this loiterer's presence in the minds of the merchant and the amorous clerk were quieted. The stranger hailed a cab that was making for a neighboring stand and hastily jumped in with a delusive affectation of unconcern. This departure brought a certain comfort to the hearts of the other clerks who were somewhat anxious at recognizing the victim of their joke.

"Well, sirs, what are you staying there with your arms folded for?" said Monsieur Guillaume to his three neophytes. "Why! Bless my soul! In times gone by when I was with the Sieur Chevrel, I would already have examined more than two pieces of cloth."

"It was light much earlier then?" said the second clerk, upon whom this task devolved.

The old merchant could not help smiling. Although two of these young people entrusted to his care by their fathers—rich manufacturers of Louviers and Sedan—only had to ask for one hundred thousand francs to have them on the day when they

were old enough to set up for themselves, Guillaume believed it to be his duty to keep them under the rod of an antiquated despotism, unknown in these days of magnificent modern shops where the clerks expect to be rich at thirty; he made them work like niggers. As to the three clerks, they were equal to as much work as would have tired out ten of those officials whose sybaritism now swells the columns of the budget. No noise broke the stillness of this solemn household, where the hinges seemed always oiled, and the smallest piece of furniture was so respectably clean as to proclaim a rigid order and economy. The most mischievous of the clerks would often amuse himself writing the date of its original receipt upon the Gruyère cheese that was abandoned to them at luncheon and that it pleased them to spare. This trick and others of a similar character would sometimes draw a smile from the youngest of Monsieur Guillaume's two daughters, the pretty virgin who had just appeared to the fascinated stranger. Although each of the apprentices, and even the oldest one, paid a large sum for board, not one of them would have dared remain at the master's table after the dessert had been served. When Madame Guillaume spoke of dressing the salad these poor youths trembled at the thought of how sparingly her prudent hand could pour the oil. They might not venture to spend a night out without giving a plausible reason for this irregularity a long time beforehand. Every Sunday, in town, two of the clerks accompanied the

Guillaume family to Mass and Vespers at Saint-Leu. Mademoiselles Virginie and Augustine, modestly dressed in print gowns, each took the arm of a clerk and walked on in front under their mother's piercing eye, who brought up the rear of this little domestic procession with her husband, who used to carry for her two big prayer-books bound in black morocco. The second clerk had no salary. As for the one whom twelve years of perseverance and discretion had initiated into the secrets of the business, he received eight hundred francs as the reward for his labors. At certain family festivities he was favored with a few presents whose value was enhanced only by the dry and wrinkled hand of Madame Guillaume: beaded purses that she carefully filled with cotton to show up their open-work design, strongly made braces, or heavy silk stockings. Sometimes, but very rarely, this prime minister was allowed a share in the family pleasures, whether they went into the country, or whether, after waiting months, they decided to avail themselves of their right, in applying for a box, to ask for a play that Paris no longer thought anything of. As for the three other clerks, the barrier of respect that formerly separated a master draper from his apprentices was so firmly fixed between them and the old merchant that they could more easily have stolen a piece of cloth than upset this sacred etiquette.

This reserve may appear ridiculous now-a-days, but these old firms were schools of morality and

honesty. The masters adopted their apprentices. A young man's linen was attended to, mended and sometimes renewed by the mistress of the house.

If a clerk fell ill he was the object of true motherly care. In case of danger, the master spared no money in sending for the most distinguished doctors; for he was not answerable to the parents of these young people for their morals and acquirements alone. If one of them, with an honorable character, met with disaster, these old merchants knew how to appreciate the intelligence that they had helped to develop and did not hesitate to entrust their daughter's happiness to one in whose hands they had so long trusted their wealth.

Guillaume was one of these old-fashioned men, and if he possessed their absurdities he also had all their qualities; and so Joseph Lebas, his head clerk and a penniless orphan was, in his opinion, the future husband of his eldest daughter, Virginie. But Joseph did not share his master's symmetrical projects, who would never, for a kingdom, have allowed his second daughter to marry before the first. The unfortunate clerk felt that his heart was wholly set upon Mademoiselle Augustine, the younger.

In order clearly to understand this passion, that had grown secretly, it is necessary to further discover the spirit of despotic government that ruled the house of the old merchant draper.

Guillaume had two daughters. The elder, Mademoiselle Virginie, was the perfect image of her

mother. Madame Guillaume, daughter of the Sieur Chevrel, held herself so upright on the seat at her desk, that more than once she overheard some wags betting that she was impaled. Her thin, long face betrayed an extreme piety. Without charm or pleasant manners, Madame Guillaume habitually decked her almost sexagenarian head with a cap of unvarying shape trimmed with lappets like that of a window. The whole neighborhood called her "la sœur tourière."* Her speech was curt and her gestures something like the jerky movements of the telegraph. Her clear, cat-like eye, seemed to bear a grudge against the whole world because she was ugly. Mademoiselle Virginie, brought up like her younger sister under the mother's despotic laws, was now twenty-eight years old. Youth lessened the unpleasant expression that her likeness to her mother sometimes gave to her face; but the maternal severity had endowed her with two great qualities that counter-balanced all; she was meek and patient. Mademoiselle Augustine, barely eighteen, was like neither father nor mother. She was one of those offsprings that, in the absence of all physical link with their parents, give credence to the prudish saying, "God sends children." Augustine was slight, or, to describe her more accurately, delicate. Graceful, and full of ingenuousness, no man of the world could have reproached this charming creature with anything but awkward gestures or certain underbred attitudes, and sometimes a want of ease.

*Tourière: *i.e.* the attendant of the turning box in convents.

Her quiet, still face breathed that transient melancholy that possesses all young girls who are too weak to venture any resistance to a mother's will. Always quietly dressed, the two sisters could only gratify a woman's innate coquetry by an excess of neatness which became them wonderfully and was in keeping with the shining counters, with the shelves which the old servant kept spotless, and with the old-fashioned simplicity of all around them. Forced by their way of life to seek happiness in persistent industry, Augustine and Virginie up till now, had given nothing but satisfaction to their mother, who secretly congratulated herself upon the perfection of their characters. It is easy to imagine the results of the education they had received. Brought up in trade, accustomed to hear nothing but dismally mercantile discussions and calculations, having learnt nothing beyond grammar, bookkeeping, a little Jewish history, French history in Le Ragois, and reading no authors but those whose books were approved of by their mother, their ideas were very limited; they knew how to keep house perfectly, they knew the cost of things, they appreciated the difficulties that are experienced in amassing money, they were economical and had a deep respect for commercial qualities. In spite of their father's income, they could darn as skilfully as they could embroider; their mother often spoke of teaching them to cook, in order that they might know how to order a dinner and know their reasons for scolding a cook. Ignorant of the pleasures of

the world, and seeing how the exemplary life of their parents was passed, they very seldom noticed anything beyond the precincts of the old patrimonial home which, to their mother, constituted the universe. The gatherings at the family solemnities formed the whole sum of their earthly joys. When the big drawing-room on the second story was opened to receive Madame Roguin, a demoiselle Chevrel, fifteen years younger than her cousin, who wore diamonds; the young Rabourdin, assistant manager of the Treasury; Monsieur César Birotteau, a rich perfumer and his wife, called Madame César; Monsieur Camusot the richest silk merchant in the Rue des Bourdonnais, and his father-in-law, Monsieur Cardot; two or three old bankers and their irreproachable wives; then, the preparations necessitated by the manner in which the silver, Dresden china, lights and glass were wrapt up, made a diversion in the monotonous lives of these three women, who ran about like nuns preparing for their bishop's reception. Then, when, at night, all three were tired out with cleaning, rubbing, unpacking and arranging the decorations for the feast, and the two young girls were helping their mother to bed, Madame Guillaume would say:

"We have done nothing to-day, my dears!"

When, during these solemn assemblies, the "sœur tourière" allowed dancing, shutting up the boston, whist and tric-trac parties in her bedroom, this privilege was considered as one of the most unexpected delights, and gave as much pleasure as when

Guillaume took his daughters to two or three big balls during the Carnival. Finally, once a year the honest draper gave a party on which he spared no expense. However rich and fashionable the guests invited, they took care not to miss it; because the most important houses in the place resorted to the enormous credit, fortune, or long tried experience of Monsieur Guillaume. But the worthy merchant's two daughters did not profit as much as might have been supposed by the opportunities society offers to young people. At these gatherings they wore dresses that were entered in the bill books of the house, but whose shabbiness made them ashamed. Their dancing was nothing remarkable, and the maternal supervision forbade any further conversation than "yes" and "no" with their partners. Besides, the laws of the old ensign of the *Cat and Racket,* ordained that all must be home by eleven, just when the life of balls and parties was beginning. Thus, though outwardly consistent with their father's means, their pleasures were often dull owing to circumstances arising from the habits and principles of the family. As to their ordinary life, a word will complete the picture. Madame Guillaume insisted that her two girls should be dressed very early, that they should come down every day at the same time, and should arrange their occupations with monastic regularity. And yet, by some chance, Augustine had a soul that was capable of feeling the emptiness of such an existence. Sometimes her blue eyes would be raised as if to pierce

the depths of the gloomy staircase and damp warehouses. After having fathomed the silence of this cloister she would seem to be listening afar to the vague revelations of that impassioned life that sets more value on feelings than things. At these moments her face would flush, her idle hands would drop the white muslin on to the polished oak counter, and presently her mother would say in a voice that was always sour in spite of the loving tone:

"Augustine! what are you thinking of, my darling?"

Perhaps *Hippolyte, Comte de Douglas*, and *Le Comte de Comminges*, two novels belonging to a cook whom Madame Guillaume had recently dismissed, and which Augustine had found in a cupboard may have contributed to the development of this young girl's ideas, for she had secretly devoured them during the long evenings of the last winter. Her expressions of vague longing, her sweet voice, her jasmine skin and blue eyes had consequently inflamed the heart of the unfortunate Lebas, with a love that was as strong as it was respectful. By some caprice that can be readily understood, Augustine felt no sort of attraction for the orphan; perhaps it was because she was unconscious of his love for her. In return the long legs, chestnut hair, large hands and robust appearance of the head clerk found a secret admirer in Mademoiselle Virginie, who, in spite of her dowry of 50,000 crowns had never been sought in marriage by anyone. There was nothing more natural than these two inverted passions born in

the silence of these obscure counters, as violets bloom in the depths of a wood. The mute and constant contemplation that these young people exchanged, from the need of distraction in the midst of prolonged work and religious quiet, was bound sooner or later to excite feelings of love. The habit of constantly seeing one face unconsciously leads to the discovery of the soul's qualities and ends in effacing its imperfections.

"At the rate this man is going, it will not be long before our daughters will have to kneel to a suitor!" said Monsieur Guillaume to himself in reading the first order with which Napoléon drew upon the conscripts. From that day, in despair at seeing his eldest daughter fading, the old merchant recalled how he had married Mademoiselle Chevrel under very nearly the same conditions as those of Joseph Lebas and Virginie. What a glorious thing it would be to marry his daughter and acquit himself of a sacred debt, by giving an orphan the same blessing that he himself had formerly received, under the same circumstances, from his predecessor. Being thirty-three years old, Joseph Lebas thought of the obstacles that the difference of fifteen years placed between Augustine and himself. Besides being intelligent enough to see through Monsieur Guillaume's plans, he also knew his inexorable principles well enough to be certain that the younger would never marry before the elder. So the poor clerk, whose heart was as good as his legs were long and his frame was big, suffered in silence.

Such was the state of affairs in this little republic in the middle of the Rue Saint-Denis, resembling nothing so much as a branch of the Trappists. But, in order to give a strict account of external events as well as sentiments, it will be necessary to go back several months before the scene with which this story opens.

*

A young man, once passing at nightfall in front of the dark shop of the *Cat and Racket,* stopped for a moment to contemplate a picture that would have held all the painters in the world.

The shop, as yet unlighted, formed a black ground at the end of which could be seen the merchant's dining-room. An astral lamp shed that yellow light that gives so much charm to the pictures of the Dutch school. The snowy linen, the silver and glass, formed brilliant accessories, which the vivid contrasts between the light and shade only served to exaggerate. The face of the head of the family and that of his wife, those of the clerks and the pure outlines of Augustine, behind whom stood a big, fat-cheeked girl, composed so curious a group,—the heads were so original and each bore so open an expression,—one could so well imagine the peace, stillness and unpretending life of this family, that, for an artist accustomed to depicting Nature, there was something hopeless in attempting to convey this casual scene. The passer-by was a young artist, who, seven years before, had carried off the Grand Prix for painting. He had just returned from Rome. Nourished upon poetry and satiated with Raphael and Michael Angelo, his soul and eyes thirsted for real nature after a long residence in a stately land overspread with the grandeur of Art. Right or

wrong such was his personal feeling. Given up for so long to fierce Italian passions his heart longed for one of those simple, placid virgins whom unfortunately he could only find in paintings at Rome. From the enthusiasm excited in his ardent soul by the artless tableau that he was watching, he very naturally passed into a profound admiration for the principal figure. Augustine seemed pensive and was no longer eating; by some arrangement of the lamps by which the light fell entirely on her face, her bust appeared to be moving in a circle of fire that showed up the outline of her head more vividly than the rest and illuminated it in a way that was half supernatural. Involuntarily the artist likened her to an exiled angel thinking of heaven. An almost unknown sensation, a clear and burning love, inundated his heart. Stopping for a moment as if crushed beneath the weight of his ideas, he tore himself away from his happiness and went home unable to eat or sleep. The next day he entered his studio not to leave it until he had set down on canvas the magic of this scene, at the recollection of which he became almost fanatical. His happiness was incomplete without a faithful portrait of his idol.

He passed by the *Cat and Racket* several times, he even dared to go in two or three times, disguised, in order to obtain a closer view of the lovely creature under the wing of Madame Guillaume. For eight whole months, devoted to his love and his brushes, he remained invisible to his most intimate friends, indifferent to society, poetry,

theatres, music and his most cherished habits. One morning Girodet infringing the orders that artists recognize and know how to evade, succeeded in finding him, and woke him up with this question:—

"What are you sending to the Salon?"

The artist seized his friend's hand, dragged him to the studio and uncovered a small easel picture and a portrait. After a slow and eager contemplation of the two masterpieces Girodet threw his arms round his friend and embraced him, unable to speak. His emotions could only be expressed as he felt them, heart to heart.

"You are in love?" said Girodet.

Both knew that the most beautiful portraits by Raphael, Titian, and Leonardo de Vinci are owing to exalted feelings which, after all, under diverse conditions, are responsible for all masterpieces. For all answer the young artist bent his head.

"How lucky you are to be in love, after returning from Italy! I do not advise you to place such works as these in the salon," added the great painter. "You see, these two pictures will not be understood. These realistic tints, and wonderful work cannot yet be appreciated. The public is not accustomed to so much depth. The pictures we paint, my good friend, are screens, fire screens. See here, we had much better write verses and translate the ancients! We may expect more glory from that than from our miserable canvas."

In spite of this charitable advice the two canvases were exhibited. The picture of the interior

caused a revolution in painting. It gave birth to the genre-paintings of which such an enormous quantity are imported into our exhibitions that one might almost believe they are obtained by some purely mechanical process. As for the portrait, there are few artists who do not recollect that living canvas, to which the public, as a whole, occasionally just, awarded the wreath that Girodet himself placed upon it. A huge crowd surrounded the two pictures—"A perfect crush," as women say. Speculators and nobles offered to cover the two canvases with double napoleons; the artist obstinately refused to sell them or to reproduce them. He was offered a large sum for his consent to engrave them, but the dealers were no more successful than the amateurs. Although society in general was talking of this event, it was not of a nature to reach the heart of the little desert in the Rue Saint-Denis; nevertheless, whilst paying a visit to Madame Guillaume, the solicitor's wife spoke about the exhibition before Augustine, whom she dearly loved, and explained the purpose of it to her. Madame Roguin's chatter naturally inspired her with a wish to see the pictures and gave her the courage to secretly ask her cousin to take her to the Louvre. The cousin was successful in prevailing upon Madame Guillaume to give her permission to snatch her little cousin from her dreary work for about two hours. So the young girl made her way through the crowd to the crowned picture. She shook like a leaf when she recognized herself. She was afraid

and looked round for Madame Roguin, from whom she had been separated by the surging crowd. At this moment her terrified eyes met the glowing face of the young artist. She suddenly recollected it as that of a stroller whom she had often noticed with curiosity, thinking he was a new neighbor.

"You see how love has inspired me!" whispered the artist to the timid creature who stood aghast at these words.

A supernatural courage helped her to break through the crowd and rejoin her cousin, who was still struggling through the masses that barred her way to the picture.

"You will be suffocated!" cried Augustine, "come away!"

But there are moments in the salon when two solitary women are not always able to make their way through the galleries. Mademoiselle Guillaume and her cousin, in consequence of the surging movements of the crowd were pushed to within a few feet of the second picture. Chance decreed that together they should approach the canvas to which fashion, for once in accordance with art, had awarded the palm of glory. The exclamation of surprise that broke from the solicitor's wife was lost in the hubbub and buzzing of the crowd; as for Augustine she was involuntarily crying at sight of this marvelous painting, and, prompted by some inexplicable feeling, she placed her finger on her lips when she saw the ecstatic face of the young artist quite close to her. The unknown nodded in reply and indicated

Madame Roguin as a wet blanket, in order to show Augustine she was understood. The poor girl grew hot as fire at this pantomime and felt herself guilty in supposing she had entered into a compact with the artist.

The stifling heat, the incessant sight of the most dazzling toilettes, the giddiness produced by the variety of colors, the multitude of painted and living figures, and the profusion of gilded frames, caused her to feel a sort of intoxication that increased her fears. She might perhaps have fainted, had she not, in spite of this chaos of sensations, experienced a strange joy in her secret heart, that quickened her whole being. Nevertheless she believed herself to be under the influence of the demon whose terrible snares she had heard predicted in the thundering eloquence of the pulpit. This moment for her was a moment of madness. She pictured herself escorted to her cousin's carriage by this young man, beaming with love and happiness. A prey to an entirely new irritation and an intoxication that yielded her in some measure to nature, Augustine listened to the eloquent voice of her heart, and looked at the young painter several times, plainly showing the trouble that possessed her. The carnation of her cheeks had never formed a stronger contrast to the whiteness of her skin. The artist then saw this beauty at its best, this modesty in all its glory. Augustine felt a sort of joy mingled with terror in the thought that her presence gave happiness to one whose name was on every

lip, and whose talent gave immortality to fleeting impressions. He loved her! It was impossible to doubt it. When she could no longer see him these simple words re-echoed in her heart—"You see how love has inspired me!" So strongly had her ardent blood roused strange forces within her that the deepening thrills seemed to her painful. She feigned a bad headache in order to avoid her cousin's questions about the pictures; but, on their return Madame Roguin could not resist speaking to Madame Guillaume of the celebrity acquired by the *Cat and Racket* and Augustine trembled in every limb when she heard her mother say she would go to the Salon to see her house. The young girl complained again of the pain she suffered, and obtained permission to go to bed.

"Headache!" cried Monsieur Guillaume, "that is all one gains at all these shows. Is it very amusing to see in a painting a thing that one can see any day in our street? Don't talk to me of these artists who, like authors, are all starving wretches. What the devil is the necessity for their taking my house to vilify it in their pictures?"

"Perhaps it may help us to sell a few extra pieces of cloth," said Joseph Lebas.

But this observation did not prevent a second condemnation of the arts and ideas at the tribunal of Trade. As may well be supposed, these dissertations did not give any great hope to Augustine, who gave herself up during the night to her first meditations upon Love. The events of that day

were like a dream that she loved to recall in her thoughts. She was a victim of all the fears, hopes, regrets and all the uncertainties of feelings that must delude a simple, timid soul like her own. How empty this dark house now seemed, and what a treasure she had found in her soul! What havoc this idea was to work in the heart of a child brought up in the bosom of such a family! What hopes might it not raise in a young girl who, hitherto reared upon ordinary principles, had always longed for a superior life! A ray of sunlight shone into this prison. Augustine suddenly loved! So many feelings were flattered at the same time that she succumbed without the least calculation. Is not Love's prism thrown between the world and the eyes of a young girl eighteen years of age? Incapable of foreseeing the terrible shocks that result from an alliance between a loving woman and a man of imagination, she believed herself destined to make his happiness, without perceiving any incongruity between herself and him. Her present was her future. The next day when her father and mother returned from the Salon, their lengthened faces indicated some disappointment. In the first place the artist had removed the two pictures; and then Madame Guillaume had lost her cashmere shawl. The knowledge that the pictures had disappeared after her visit to the Salon was a revelation to Augustine of a delicacy of feeling that women always, and even instinctively, appreciate. The morning that Théodore de Sommervieux—such

was the name of the celebrity engraved upon Augustine's heart—returning from a ball, was sprinkled by the clerks of the *Cat and Racket*—whilst he was waiting for the vision of his simple little friend—who most assuredly did not know he was there—was the fourth time only that the two lovers had seen each other since the scene in the Salon. The obstacles that the régime of the Guillaume house presented to the artist's impetuous character, only served to increase his passion for Augustine with a strength that can easily be imagined. How was it possible to approach a young girl seated at a counter between two such women as Mademoiselle Virginie and Madame Guillaume?

How correspond with her when her mother never left her? Apt, like all lovers, to imagine misfortunes, Théodore fancied he had a rival in one of the clerks, and supposed the others to be in the interests of his rival. Even if he escaped so many Argus eyes, he pictured himself falling under the stern gaze of the old merchant or of Madame Guillaume. On all sides barriers and hopelessness! The very violence of his passion prevented the young painter from resorting to those ingenious expedients that with prisoners as well as lovers, seem to be the final efforts of a brain that is stimulated by a mad desire for liberty or by the ardor of love. So Théodore rushed about the neighborhood with the activity of a madman, as if motion could inspire him with some stratagem. Having thoroughly racked his imagination he bethought himself of bribing the

fat-cheeked servant. Several letters were then exchanged from time to time during the fortnight that followed the unlucky morning when Monsieur Guillaume and Théodore had scrutinized each other so well. For the present, the two young people agreed to see each other at a certain hour of the day, and on Sundays at Saint-Leu during Mass and Vespers. Augustine had sent her beloved Théodore a list of the family friends and relations, to whom the young artist tried to gain access, in hopes of exciting some interest in his love affairs, in one of these people who were absorbed in money and trade, and to whom a genuine passion would seem the most absurd and unheard of speculation. Otherwise there was no change in the ways of the *Cat and Racket.* If Augustine were absent-minded; if, against every kind of rule in the domestic chart she went to her room, thanks to a pot of flowers, to arrange some signals; if she sighed, in fact, if she were at all thoughtful, nobody, not even her mother, was aware of it. This state of affairs might somewhat surprise those who understood the spirit of the house, where any thought infected with poetry must have formed a contrast to the people and the things, where nobody could indulge in a gesture or look that was not seen and analyzed. And yet nothing could be more natural; the quiet vessel navigating the stormy sea of the Place de Paris, under the flag of the *Cat and Racket,* was a prey to one of those gales which, from their periodic returns, might be termed equinoctial.

For fifteen days the five men of the crew, Madame Guillaume and Mademoiselle Virginie had devoted themselves to the stupendous labor known as an *inventory*. They moved all the bales and measured the pieces to ascertain the exact value of the remnants. The card attached to each packet was carefully examined to see when the cloth had been bought. The present price was affixed. Monsieur Guillaume looked like a captain directing manœuvres, standing all the time, with his measure in his hand and his pen behind his ear. His shrill voice passing through a peephole in communicating with the depths of the hatchway of the basement uttered these barbarous commercial terms, that can only be expressed in enigmas: "How much of H-N-Z? Take it away—How much left of Q-X-?—Two ells—What price?—Five-five-three—Carry to 3A all J-J, all M-P, and the remainder of V-D-O."

Thousands of equally intelligible phrases sounded across the counters like verses of modern poetry that romanticists might have been quoting to each other to indulge their enthusiasm for one of their parts. In the evening Guillaume, closeted with his clerk and his wife, settled the accounts, entered afresh, wrote to those in arrears and made up the bills. All three prepared this enormous task, the result being written on a square of foolscap, and proved to the house Guillaume that it had so much in cash, so much in goods, so much in drafts and bills; that it owed not a penny, but was owed one or two hundred thousand francs; that the capital

had augmented; that the leases, houses and funds were to be increased, repaired or renewed. From all this arose the necessity of amassing more money with renewed ardor, these industrious ants never dreaming of asking—"To what purpose?" Under cover of this annual tumult Augustine luckily escaped their Argus-like investigation. At last, one Saturday night the closing of the inventory took place. Upon this occasion the figures in the assets presented so many ciphers that Guillaume relaxed the severity of the orders that prevailed all the year round at dessert. The cunning draper rubbed his hands and allowed his clerks to remain at table. Each man had hardly finished his demi verre of home-made liqueur, when the rumbling of a carriage was heard. The family went to see Cinderella at the Variétés whilst to each of the two youngest clerks was given a six-franc piece and permission to go where he pleased, provided he came in at midnight.

*

On Sunday morning, in spite of this debauch, the old merchant draper shaved at six o'clock, put on his chestnut colored coat—whose magnificent lustre always gave him the same pleasure,—fastened gold buckles in the flaps of his ample silk breeches; then, towards seven, when the whole house was still wrapt in slumber, he went to the little closet adjoining his shop on the first story. Daylight came through a window armed with great iron bars, that overlooked a little square courtyard framed in such dark walls that it was not at all unlike a well. The old tradesman opened the sheet-iron shutters with which he was so familiar, and lifted half the window by sliding it in its groove. The icy air from the yard freshened the stuffy atmosphere of the closet, which had that odor peculiar to offices. The merchant stood, resting his hand on the greasy arm of a cane arm-chair lined with faded morocco, as if uncertain whether to sit down or not. His expression softened as he looked at the office with two desks, where his wife's place, opposite his own, was arranged in a small arch contrived in the wall. He looked at the numbered half-sheets, the string, the implements, the instruments for marking the cloth, and the till, objects of an immemorial origin, and he fancied he could see himself once more before the conjured-up spirit of

the Sieur Chevrel. He drew forward the identical stool upon which he had sat in the presence of his defunct master. This stool, upholstered in black leather, with the horsehair that had long been escaping from the corners, he placed with trembling hands in the same spot as his predecessor had done; then in an indescribable state of agitation he pulled the bell that communicated with the head of Joseph Lebas's bed. Having made this decisive move, the old man, doubtless overcome by these recollections, took up two or three bills of exchange that had been presented to him, and was looking over them with unseeing eyes, when Joseph Lebas suddenly appeared.

"Sit down there," said Guillaume pointing to the stool.

As the old master had never bidden his clerk sit in his presence, Joseph Lebas trembled.

"What do you think of these drafts?" asked Guillaume.

"They will not be paid."

"What?"

"Why, the day before yesterday I knew that Etienne & Co. had made all payments in gold."

"Oh! oh!" cried the clothier, "one must be very sick to bring up bile. Let's talk of something else. Joseph, the inventory is finished."

"Yes sir, and the dividend is one of the finest you have ever had."

"Don't use those modern words—Call it 'proceeds,' Joseph. Do you know, my boy, that we

owe these results in a small measure to you? therefore, I no longer wish you to receive any salary. Madame Guillaume has suggested to me to offer you a share in the business. Eh! Joseph! 'Guillaume and Lebas.' Would not these names make a fine firm? One might add *'And Company'* to round off the signature."

Joseph Lebas's eyes filled with tears which he tried to hide.

"Ah! Monsieur Guillaume! What have I done to deserve so much goodness? I have only done my duty. You did a great deal in even interesting yourself in a poor orph——"

He rubbed his cuffs one over the other, and dared not look at the old man, who smiled as he thought that this youth, like himself in times gone by, needed encouragement to make a complete explanation.

"And yet," continued Virginie's father, "you hardly deserve this favor Joseph! You do not place as much confidence in me as I do in you"—the clerk suddenly raised his head—"you know the secret of the till. For two years I have told you nearly all my affairs. I have made you travel for fabrics—In short—to you I have bared my heart—But you?—you have an attachment of which you have not told me a single word"—Joseph Lebas reddened—"Ha! ha!" cried Guillaume, "you think you can deceive an old fox like myself? I, who, as you know, found out the insolvent Lecoq!"

"How, sir," answered Lebas, looking at his

master as intently as the latter looked at him, "how! you know that I love?"

"I know all, you rascal!" said the venerable and cunning merchant, pulling his ear—"And I forgive you; I did the same thing myself."

"And will you give her to me?"

"Yes, with fifty thousand crowns, and I shall leave you as much again, and we will continue with a new firm. We will brew fresh business, my boy!" cried the old merchant, getting up and waving his arms. "You see, my son-in-law, trade is the only thing! Those who ask what pleasure is to be got out of it are fools. To be in the track of business—to know how to manage on the spot—to wait with the eagerness of a gambler to see if Etienne & Company are going bankrupt—to see a regiment of the Imperial Guard passing by, dressed in our cloth, to trip up a neighbor, honestly of course! to manufacture cheaper than others—to follow a business that is first sketched out, that begins, increases, totters and finally succeeds—to know like the police all the resources of the mercantile firms in order to make no mistakes,—to stand erect in the face of failure—to possess friends, through correspondence, in all the manufacturing towns;—is not this a never-ending amusement, Joseph? But it is life! I shall die in the midst of such work, like old Chevrel, taking things, however, at my ease."

In the heat of his most vigorous extemporizing, old Guillaume had hardly looked at his clerk, who was weeping bitterly.

"Why, Joseph! my poor boy, what is the matter?"

"Oh! I love her so, so much, Monsieur Guillaume, that my heart fails me, I fancy—"

"Well, boy," said the merchant softening, "you are luckier than you think—by Jove! for she loves you. I know it!" and he winked his little green eyes as he looked at his clerk.

"Mademoiselle Augustine! Mademoiselle Augustine!" cried Joseph Lebas in his excitement.

He was rushing out of the closet when he was arrested by a hand of iron and his master, horrified, swung him swiftly round in front of him.

"What has Augustine to do with this matter?" asked Guillaume, whose tone of voice promptly froze the unfortunate Joseph Lebas.

"Is it not she—whom—I love?" stammered the clerk.

Disconcerted at his own want of perspicacity, Guillaume sat down again and buried his peaked head in his hands to think out the strange position in which he was placed. Joseph Lebas remained standing, ashamed and distressed.

"Joseph," resumed the merchant, with cold dignity, "I was speaking of Virginie. I know that love cannot be made to order. I trust your discretion and we will forget what has occurred. I will never allow Augustine to marry before Virginie. Your interest will be ten per cent."

Inspired by love with an incredible degree of courage and eloquence, the clerk clasped his hands,

began to speak, and for a quarter of an hour spoke to Guillaume with so much heat and feeling that the position of affairs was changed. Had it been some commercial business the old merchant would have decided it by fixed rules; but, as he would have put it, cast a thousand miles away from commerce on a sea of sentiment without a compass, he floated irresolutely before so original an occurrence. Carried away by his natural goodness of heart, he beat about the bush for a little while.

"But, deuce take it! Joseph, you are not unaware of the fact that there is ten years' difference between my two children! Mademoiselle Chevrel was certainly not beautiful, but then she could not complain about me. Do as I did. Come now, do not weep any more! How silly you are! What more do you want? Perhaps it will all come right, we will see. There is always some way out of a difficulty. We men are not always sentimental lovers about our wives—You understand? Madame Guillaume is very prejudiced and—Well, then! Hang it all! my boy, give your arm to Augustine this morning going to Mass!"

Such were the random sentences jerked out by Guillaume. The inference with which they concluded enraptured the love-sick clerk; he was already thinking of one of his friends for Mademoiselle Virginie when he came out of the smoky closet squeezing his future father-in-law's hand, after having said to him with a look of intelligence that all would be arranged for the best.

"What will Madame Guillaume think?"

This idea greatly worried the worthy merchant when he was alone.

At luncheon, Madame Guillaume and Virginie, from whom the master had temporarily concealed his disappointment, looked somewhat slily at Joseph Lebas, who was greatly embarrassed. The bashfulness of the clerk won him favor with his mother-in-law.

The old lady became so lively that she actually smiled at Monsieur Guillaume, and indulged in several little jokes used from time immemorial in this simple family. She called the heights of Virginie and Joseph in question, so as to have their measure. This preparatory nonsense clouded the brow of the head of the family and he even affected such a love of decorum that he ordered Augustine to take the head clerk's arm going to Saint-Leu.

Madame Guillaume, astonished at this masculine delicacy, honored her husband with an approving nod. So the procession left the house in an order that could suggest no spiteful interpretation to the neighbors.

"Do you not think, Mademoiselle Augustine," said the trembling clerk, "that the wife of a merchant, who has so much influence, like Monsieur Guillaume for instance, might amuse herself a little more than Madame does, might wear diamonds or ride in a carriage? As for me, if I were to marry, I should do all the work, and see my wife happy.

I should not put her in my office. You see, in the cloth business women are no longer so necessary as formerly. Monsieur Guillaume was quite right to act as he did, and besides, it was his wife's choice. But it is sufficient if a woman knows enough to lend a hand with the accounts, correspondence, retailing, orders, or her household, so as not to be idle—that is all. At seven o'clock, when the shop would be closed, I would amuse myself—I should go to the play or into society—but you are not listening?"

"Oh! yes, Monsieur Joseph. What do you say to painting? That is a splendid calling."

"Yes, I know a master house painter, Monsieur Lourdois, who is rich." And chatting in this way, the family arrived at the church of Saint-Leu. There, Madame Guillaume reasserted her rights, and for the first time, placed Augustine by her side. Virginie took the fourth chair next to Lebas. During the sermon, all went well between Augustine and Théodore, who, standing behind a pillar, was praying to his Madonna with fervor; but, during the raising of the Host, Madame Guillaume noticed, a little late in the day, that her daughter Augustine held her prayer-book upside down. She was on the point of giving her a good scolding when, lowering her veil, she suspended her lecture and followed the directions of the young girl's eyes.

By the help of her spectacles she saw the young artist, whose fashionable elegance gave him the appearance of some cavalry officer off duty, rather

than a merchant of the *quartier.* It is difficult to imagine the furious condition of Madame Guillaume —who flattered herself that she had brought up her daughters to perfection—when she discovered a clandestine love in Augustine's heart, the danger of which her prudishness and ignorance greatly exaggerated. She believed her daughter to be polluted to the heart.

"Hold your book the right way, Mademoiselle," she said in a low voice, but shaking with rage.

She hastily snatched the accusing prayer-book and replaced it in such a way that the letters resumed their natural order.

"You had better not look anywhere else but at your prayers," she added, "or you will have me to deal with. After Mass, your father and I will have something to say to you."

These words came like a thunderbolt to poor Augustine. She felt herself giving way; but struggling with the pain she felt and the fear of causing a scandal in the church, she had the courage to hide her agonies. And yet it is easy to imagine the violent state of mind she was in when she saw her prayer-book shaking and the tears falling on each page as she turned it.

By the furious glance that Madame Guillaume hurled at him, the artist saw the danger with which his love was threatened and he went out, his heart full of anger, determined to dare all.

"Go to your room, Mademoiselle," said Madame Guillaume to her daughter upon reaching the house,

"we will call you, and above all, do not dare to come out."

The conference between the husband and wife was so secret, that at first nothing transpired. But Virginie, who had encouraged her sister with a thousand kindly representations, carried her kindness to the extent of slipping to the door of her mother's bedroom where the discussion was taking place, in order to gather a few words. The first time she went from the third to the second story, she heard her father crying:

"Then you wish to kill your daughter, Madame?"

"My poor child," said Virginie to her tearful sister, "papa is defending you."

"And what do they intend to do to Théodore?" asked the simple creature.

The inquisitive Virginie went down once more; but this time she stayed longer; she learnt that Lebas loved Augustine. It was fated that upon this memorable day, this ordinarily peaceful household should become a pandemonium. Monsieur Guillaume distracted Joseph Lebas when he confided to him that Augustine loved a stranger. Lebas, who had advised his friend to propose for Mademoiselle Virginie saw all his hopes dashed to the ground. Mademoiselle Virginie, overcome with the knowledge that Joseph had in some sort of way refused her, was seized with a sick headache. The discord sown between husband and wife by the discussion they had had together, when, for the third time in their lives, their opinions differed, showed itself

in a terrible manner. At last four hours after noon, Augustine, pale, trembling and with reddened eyes, appeared before her father and mother. The poor child naïvely related the brief history of her love. Reassured by her father, who had promised to listen in silence, she took a certain courage in pronouncing the name of her beloved Théodore de Sommervieux before her parents, and mischievously emphasized the aristocratic *de*. Abandoning herself to the strange pleasure of talking of her feelings, she mustered up sufficient audacity to declare with an innocent firmness that she loved Monsieur de Sommervieux, that she had written to him, and she added with tears in her eyes:

"It would make me miserable to sacrifice me to another."

"But, Augustine, do you not know that he is nothing but a painter?" cried her horrified mother.

"Madame Guillaume!" said the old man, silencing his wife.—"Augustine," said he, "artists are generally good-for-nothings.—They are too extravagant to be anything but worthless fellows. I supplied the late Monsieur Joseph Vernet, the late Monsieur Lekain and the late Monsieur Noverre. Ah! if you but knew the tricks that this Monsieur Noverre, Monsieur le Chevalier de Saint-Georges, and above all Monsieur Philidor played upon that poor father Chevrel! They are a queer lot, I know well; they all chatter so, and have such ways—ah! your Monsieur Sumer—Somm—"

"De Sommervieux, father!"

"Well, de Sommervieux, be it! He would never have been as amiable to you as Monsieur le Chevalier de Saint-Georges was to me—the day that I obtained a decision of the consuls against him. Indeed the people of rank were always so in former times."

"But, father, Monsieur Théodore is of noble birth and has written to me that he is rich. His father was the Chevalier de Sommervieux before the Revolution."

At these words, Monsieur Guillaume looked at his formidable half, who, in feminine contrariness, was tapping the floor with her foot and maintaining a gloomy silence; she even avoided turning her angry eyes toward Augustine, and appeared to leave the responsibility of so grave a matter to Monsieur Guillaume since her advice was not heeded; nevertheless, in spite of her apparent phlegm, when she saw her husband resigning himself so meekly to a catastrophe that was in no sense commercial, she cried:

"Really, sir! you show a weakness with your daughters—but—"

The noise of a carriage stopping at the door, suddenly interrupted the reprimand that the old merchant already dreaded. In a moment Madame Roguin entered the room, and looking at the three performers in this domestic drama:

"I know all, my cousin," she said with a patronizing air.

Madame Roguin's one fault was that of believing

that the wife of a Parisian notary can play the rôle of a great lady.

"I know all," she repeated, "and I come into Noah's ark like the dove with the olive branch. I read this allegory in the *Génie du Christianisme,*" she said turning to Madame Guillaume, "the comparison ought to please you, cousin. Do you know," she added smiling at Augustine, "that Monsieur de Sommervieux is a charming man? He gave me my own portrait to-day painted by a master's hand. It is worth at least six thousand francs."

At these words she gently tapped Monsieur Guillaume on the arm. The old merchant could not resist pouting his lips in a way that was peculiar to him.

"I know Monsieur de Sommervieux very well," continued the dove, "for the last fortnight he has come to my soirées, and is the life of them. He has told me all his troubles and has enlisted me as his advocate. I know from this morning that he adores Augustine, and he will have her. Ah! cousin do not shake your head like that in token of refusal. Know then, that he is to be created baron, and has just been appointed Chevalier of the Legion of Honor by the Emperor himself at the Salon.

"Roguin has become his notary and knows all his affairs. Well then, Monsieur de Sommervieux possesses in good landed property twelve thousand francs a year. Do you know that the father-in-law of such a man might become something, mayor of his arrondissement for instance! Did you not see

how Monsieur Dupont was made a Count of the Empire and Senator, for having gone, in his capacity as mayor, to congratulate the Emperor upon his entry into Vienna? Oh! this marriage will take place. I adore him, I do, this good young man. Such bearing as his toward Augustine is only to be found in novels. There, my little one, you will be happy, and all the world will envy you. Madame la Duchesse de Carigliano, who comes to my soirées, dotes upon Monsieur Sommervieux. Some spiteful tongues say she comes only on his account, as if a duchess of yesterday could be out of place in the house of a Chevrel whose family can boast of a century of good bourgeoisie.—Augustine!" resumed Madame Roguin after a short pause, "I have seen the portrait. Goodness! how beautiful it is! Do you know the Emperor wished to see it? He said laughingly to the Vice-Constable that if many such women as that were at Court whilst so many kings came there, it would be hard to maintain the peace of Europe. Is that not flattering?"

The storms with which this day had begun were like those of Nature, bringing back calm, serene weather. Madame Roguin was so bewitching in the course of conversation, she knew so well what chords to strike at once in the dry hearts of Monsieur and Madame Guillaume, that she ended by finding one of which she took advantage. At this singular epoch trade and finance were more than ever possessed by the foolish mania of allying themselves with noblemen, and the generals of the Empire were

not slow to profit by this inclination. Monsieur Guillaume was singularly opposed to this deplorable passion. His favorite axioms were, that to be happy a woman should marry a man of her own class; retribution sooner or later overtook those who soared too high;—love withstood so little the worries of housekeeping that each must seek sound qualities in the other in order to be happy; one of the two must not know more than the other, because above all they should understand each other; a husband who spoke Greek and the wife Latin ran the risk of dying of hunger. He had invented this sort of proverb. He would compare such marriages to old silk and woolen stuffs where the silk always finished by cutting the wool. And yet, so much vanity lies at the bottom of man's heart, that the prudence of the pilot who so well guided the *Cat and Racket*, succumbed to the aggressive volubility of Madame Roguin. The severe Madame Guillaume was the first to find motives in her daughter's inclination to induce her to act contrary to her principles and consent to receive Monsieur de Sommervieux at the house, secretly determined to submit him to a close examination.

The old merchant went to find Lebas and informed him of the state of things. At half-past six, under the glass roof of the dining-room rendered famous by the painter, were assembled Madame and Monsieur Roguin, the young artist and his charming Augustine, Joseph Lebas, who took his good fortune patiently, and Mademoiselle Virginie, whose headache had

vanished. Monsieur and Madame Guillaume saw a vision of their children established and the future of the *Cat and Racket* intrusted to skilful hands. Their satisfaction was complete, when, at dessert, Théodore presented them with the marvelous picture that they had not seen, and that depicted the interior of their old shop, to which so much happiness was due.

"How nice it is!" cried Guillaume. "To think that anyone would give thirty thousand francs for that—"

"And there are my lappets!" said Madame Guillaume.

"And those unfolded stuffs," added Lebas, "one could almost take hold of them."

"Draperies always paint well," answered the artist, "we should be too fortunate, we modern artists, if we could attain the perfection of antique drapery."

"Then you like drapery?" cried father Guillaume. "Well, shake hands, my young friend. As you have such a good opinion of trade we shall agree. Well! and why should it be despised? The world began that way since Adam sold Paradise for an apple, though, to be sure that was not a first-rate speculation!" And the old merchant, elated by the champagne that he was freely circulating, burst into a loud, hearty laugh. So blinded was the young artist that he thought his future relatives delightful. He was not above enlivening them with a few tales in good taste. And so he pleased everybody.

At night, when the smartly furnished salon, as Monsieur Guillaume expressed it, was deserted; while Madame Guillaume was trotting from table to chimney-piece, from candelabra to candle, hastily blowing out the lights, the worthy merchant, always clear-sighted in a matter of business or money, drew Augustine to his side; and, having seated her on his knee, delivered her this discourse:

"My dear child, you shall marry your Sommervieux, as you wish to; you may risk your capital of happiness. But I take no stock in these thirty thousand francs that are earned by spoiling good canvas. Money that comes so fast goes as quickly. Did I not hear that young scatterbrain saying to-night that if money was round it was made to roll? If it is round for extravagant people, it is flat for economical people who pile it up. Now, my child, that handsome boy talks of giving you carriages and diamonds. He has money, let him spend it on you! well and good! I have nothing to say to that. But as to what I shall give you, I do not wish money pocketed with so much difficulty to vanish in carriages and gewgaws. He who spends too much is never rich. You cannot buy all Paris even with the hundred thousand crowns of your dowry. It is all very well for you to inherit several hundreds of thousands of francs one day, but, by Jingo! I'll make you wait for it as long as possible. So I drew your intended into a corner, and, for a man who managed the bankrupt Lecoq it was not difficult to obtain an artist's consent to marry with the wife's

estate separate. I shall attend to the contract in order to clearly stipulate the settlements he proposes to make. You see, my child, I hope to be a grandfather, and hang it all! I wish to look after my grandchildren already; swear to me here never to sign a deed of money without my advice; and if I am gone to join old Chevrel, swear to me you will consult young Lebas, your brother-in-law. Promise me."

"Yes, father, I swear it to you."

As she said these words in a low voice the old man kissed his daughter on both cheeks. That night, all the lovers slept almost as peacefully as Monsieur and Madame Guillaume.

A few months after this memorable Sunday, the high altar of Saint-Leu witnessed two very different weddings. Augustine and Théodore came in all the glamor of happiness; their eyes full of love, dressed in the most elegant attire, attended by a brilliant train. Virginie, arrived in a livery coach with her family, and, leaning upon her father's arm, meekly followed her younger sister in simple finery, like some shadow that was indispensable to the harmonies of the picture. Monsieur Guillaume had taken the greatest pains imaginable to arrange that Virginie should be married in church before Augustine; but he had the mortification of seeing the principal and lesser clergy alike addressing the most elegant of the brides on every occasion. He heard some of his neighbors particularly approving Mademoiselle Virginie's good sense, who, they

said, was making by far the best marriage and remained true to the *quartier;* whilst they launched several envious sneers at Augustine, who was marrying an artist, a nobleman; they added with a sort of dismay that if the Guillaumes soared too high, the cloth business was lost. Overhearing an old fan merchant saying that "that spendthrift would soon bring her to want," old Guillaume inwardly congratulated himself upon his foresight in the matrimonial agreement. That night after a sumptuous ball, followed by one of those abundant suppers that are fast dying out in the present generation, Monsieur and Madame Guillaume remained at their mansion in the Rue du Colombier where the wedding had taken place; Monsieur and Madame Lebas returned in their hack to the old house in the Rue Saint-Denis to look after the wreck of the *Cat and Racket;* the artist intoxicated with joy, took his beloved Augustine in his arms, hastily carried her off when their brougham reached the Rue des Trois-Frères, and led her into a room adorned by every art.

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The transport of passion that possessed Théodore lasted the young couple almost an entire year without the least cloud to darken the blue sky above. Existence for these two lovers had no burdens. Over each day Théodore distributed incredible beauties of pleasure, he loved to vary the excesses of passion with the luxurious languor of a repose in which the soul is so lost in ecstasy that it seems to forget any bodily union. Incapable of thought, the happy Augustine gave herself up to the undulating course of her delight. She fancied she was not doing enough in wholly abandoning herself to the lawful, holy love of marriage; besides, simple and naïve, she knew neither the coquetry of refusal, nor the power that a young woman of the world can exercise over a husband by ingenious caprices; she loved too well to look into the future and imagined that so delicious a life could never cease. Happy, then, in being her husband's sole pleasure, she believed that this inextinguishable love would always be her most beautiful adornment, as her devotion and submission were to be an eternal attraction. In short, the joy of love had made her so radiant that her beauty had roused her pride and gave her a consciousness of always being able to influence as susceptible a man as Monsieur de Sommervieux. Thus her position of wife had taught her no lessons

but those of love. In the midst of this happiness she remained the ignorant little girl who used to live in the obscurity of the Rue Saint-Denis, and never thought of adopting the style, attainments or tone of the society in which she was to live. Her words being those of love, she displayed a sort of versatility of mind and a certain delicacy of expression; but she used the language common to all women when they find themselves plunged into a passion that seems to be their natural element. If by any chance she expressed an idea that jarred upon Théodore, the young artist would laugh at it as one does at the first mistakes of a foreigner, which end by becoming wearisome if they are not corrected. In spite of so much love, at the end of this year which had flown as delightfully as it had rapidly, Sommervieux one morning felt the need of resuming work and his old habits. His wife was pregnant. He went amongst his friends again. During the tedious delays of the year when a young wife nurses a child for the first time, he doubtless worked with zeal; but now and then he sought distraction in society. The house to which he went most willingly was that of the Duchesse de Carigliano, who had finally attracted the celebrated artist. When Augustine had recovered and her son no longer required those constant attentions that deprive a mother of the pleasures of society, Théodore set his heart upon testing the gratification of amour propre bestowed by society upon a man when he appears with a beautiful woman, an object of

envy and admiration. To make her appearance in salons with all the éclat borrowed from her husband's fame, to see the jealousy of other women, was a new source of pleasure to Augustine; but it was the last reflex of his conjugal happiness. She began by offending her husband's vanity, when, in spite of fruitless efforts, she betrayed her ignorance, the impropriety of her language, and the narrowness of her ideas. Sommervieux's temperament, restrained for nearly two and a half years by the first transports of love, now resumed with a tranquillity of a less recent acquisition, the habits and inclinations which had been for a while diverted from their course. Poetry, painting, and the exquisite delights of imagination assert indefeasible rights over lofty minds. These exigencies of a forceful soul had not been suppressed these two years, they had only found new pastures. When the fields of Love had been overrun and the artist, childlike, had so greedily gathered the roses and cornflowers that he did not see that his hands could hold no more, the scene changed. If the artist showed his wife the sketches of his most beautiful compositions, she would exclaim just as old Guillaume might have done: "How pretty!" This lukewarm admiration did not spring from a conscientious perception, but from a loving, implicit trust. Augustine preferred one look to the most beautiful picture. The only loftiness she recognized was that of the heart. Finally, Théodore could no longer shut his eyes to a cruel truth; his

wife was insensible to poetry, she did not inhabit his sphere, she did not follow him in all his caprices, in his improvisations, his joys or sorrows; she walked in a commonplace way in a substantial world, whilst he was in the clouds. Ordinary people cannot appreciate the constant sufferings of a being, who, united to another by the closest of all intimacies, is continually forced to suppress the most valuable expansions of his mind and to restore to nothingness the images that a magic power forces him to create. For such a one, this torture is all the more cruel, because the feeling that he bears to his companion demands, as its first precept, that they should never conceal anything from each other, and that the effusions of the mind should mingle as well as the outpourings of the soul. The promptings of nature are not to be disobeyed with impunity; she is as inexorable as necessity, which is most assuredly a kind of social nature. Sommervieux took refuge in the peace and silence of his studio, hoping that the habit of living with artists might improve his wife and develop in her the torpid germs of a higher intelligence which some superior people believe to be pre-existing in everyone; but Augustine was too sincerely religious not to be alarmed by the tone of the artists. At the first dinner given by Théodore, she heard a young artist say with that childish airiness that she failed to see, and that absolves a jest from any profanity:

"But, madame, is not your Heaven more beautiful

than *Raphael's Transfiguration?* Well, I am tired of looking at it."

So Augustine exhibited in this witty society a spirit of diffidence that escaped nobody's observation; she embarrassed everyone. An uncomfortable artist is merciless; he either flies or he scoffs. Amongst her other absurdities Madame Guillaume had always exaggerated the dignity which she supposed suitable to a married woman; and though often teased about it, Augustine could not refrain from a weak imitation of the maternal prudishness. This exaggeration of modesty that virtuous women do not always avoid, inspired several pencilled epigrams, whose innocent playfulness was in too good taste to offend Sommervieux. Even had these jokes been a little more cruel, they would after all only have been retaliations practised upon him by his friends. But to a soul so easily susceptible to outside impressions, nothing is a trifle. And so he insensibly felt a coldness that could but go on increasing. To attain conjugal happiness a mountain has to be scaled where a narrow platform is close to a very steep and slippery bank, and the artist's love was rapidly descending it. He deemed his wife incapable of appreciating the moral considerations which, in his own eyes, justified his singular attitude towards her, and believed himself perfectly innocent in hiding from her the thoughts that she could not understand and the deviations that do not come under the jurisdiction of a bourgeois conscience. Augustine shut herself up in silent,

gloomy sorrow. These secret feelings placed a veil between husband and wife that could but thicken day by day. Although her husband never failed to show her every consideration, Augustine could not help quivering when she saw him reserving for society the treasures of talent and grace that he had formerly laid at her feet. Very soon she put a fatal construction upon the witty conversations society holds upon the inconstancy of men. She did not complain, but her attitude was equivalent to reproaches.

Three years after her marriage, this young and pretty woman, who drove by so radiantly in her brilliant carriage, who lived in a sphere of glory and wealth envied by careless people incapable of justly estimating the conditions of life, was a prey to terrible grief; her color faded, she reflected and compared; and then misery revealed to her the first texts of experience. She resolved bravely to continue her round of duties, hoping that this generous conduct might sooner or later restore her husband's love; but it was not so. When Sommervieux, weary with work, came out of his studio, Augustine could not hide her work so quickly but that the painter could see that his wife was mending his own and the house linen with all the care of a thrifty housekeeper. She generously and uncomplainingly provided the money for all her husband's extravagances; but, in her desire to preserve her beloved Théodore's wealth she practised economy herself, as well as in certain details of the domestic administration. This behavior is incompatible with the

carelessness of artists, who, at the end of their careers, have so much enjoyed life, that they never seek the cause of their ruin. There is no need to follow each degradation of color with which the brilliant tint of their honeymoon disappeared and left them in a great darkness. One evening, the wretched Augustine, who had for a long time heard her husband speaking enthusiastically of the Duchesse de Carigliano, received from a friend some maliciously charitable warnings as to the nature of the attachment that Sommervieux entertained for this celebrated coquette of the Imperial Court. Augustine saw herself at twenty-one, in all the flush of youth and beauty, abandoned for a woman of thirty-six. Conscious of her misery in the midst of society and entertainments that to her were empty, the poor little thing no longer cared for the admiration she excited, or for the envy she inspired. Her face wore a new expression. Melancholy had laid upon her features the meekness of resignation and the pallor of a despised love. It was not long before she was courted by the most fascinating men; but she remained alone and virtuous. Two or three disdainful words dropped by her husband, filled her with an incredible despair. A fatal glimmer dimly revealed to her the deficiency of touch that in consequence of her poor education, hindered the perfect union of her soul with Théodore's; she loved him well enough to forgive him and condemn herself. She wept tears of blood and recognized too late that there can be misalliances of

mind as well as those of manner and rank. In musing upon the early delights of her union she summed up the extent of the past happiness and admitted to herself that so rich a harvest of love was a whole lifetime that could only be expiated by misery. However, she was too sincerely in love to lose all hope. Accordingly, she ventured at twenty-one years old to educate herself and to make her imagination at least worthy of the one she admired.

"If I am not a poet," she said to herself, "I shall at least understand poetry."

And then, displaying all the force of will and energy which all women possess when they love, Madame de Sommervieux attempted to change her character, her manners and her customs; but, whilst devouring books and studying with zeal, she only succeeded in becoming less ignorant. Versatility of mind and charms of conversation are a gift of nature or the results of education from the cradle. She could appreciate music and enjoy it, but sang without taste. She understood literature and the beauties of poetry, but it was too late to instil them into her rebellious memory. She listened with pleasure to the conversations of society to which she herself contributed nothing brilliant. Her religious ideas and childish prejudices prevented the complete emancipation of her intelligence. In short, a prejudice against her had insinuated itself into Théodore's mind which she could not overcome. The artist scoffed at those who praised his wife, and his jests were often enough justifiable; he

overawed this pathetic young creature to such a degree that in his presence, or when they were tête-à-tête, she trembled. Embarrassed by her overwhelming desire to please, she felt her intelligence and acquirements vanishing into mere sentiment. Her constancy even annoyed this faithless husband, who seemed to be urging her to make mistakes by accusing her virtue of insensibility. Augustine vainly strove, against her judgment, to adapt herself to her husband's caprices and whims, and to devote herself to his egotistical vanity; she did not reap the benefit of her sacrifices. It may be that they had both missed the moment which might have brought them together. One day the young wife's over-sensitive heart received one of those shocks that wrench the bonds of sentiment so hard, that it seems as if they must be broken. She isolated herself. But soon a fatal idea prompted her to seek consolation and advice in the bosom of her family.

So one morning she turned in the direction of the grotesque façade of the humble and silent house where her childhood had been passed. She sighed as she looked at the window from which, one day, she had blown the first kiss to him who to-day brought as much fame as misery into her life. Nothing was changed in the retreat where, however, the drapery business was reviving. Augustine's sister occupied her mother's place at the old-fashioned desk. The unhappy girl met her brother-in-law with his pen behind his ear, but he seemed almost too busy to listen to her; the formidable

signals of a general inventory were going on around him; and so he left her with an excuse. She was somewhat coldly received by her sister, who bore her some ill-will. For Augustine, radiant in her pretty carriage, had only paid her sister flying visits. The wife of the prudent Lebas, thinking that money was the primary object of this morning call, tried to maintain a reserve that made Augustine smile more than once. The painter's wife perceived that, save for lappets in the cap, her mother had found in Virginie a successor who kept up the ancient credit of the *Cat and Racket*. At lunch she noticed certain changes in the régime of the house that did credit to Joseph Lebas's good sense; the clerks remained for dessert, they were allowed to speak, and the abundance of food indicated comfort without luxury. The young beauty came upon some tickets for a box at the "Français," where she remembered having seen her sister from time to time. The richness of the cashmere shawl worn by Madame Lebas attested the generosity shown to her by her husband. In fact, husband and wife progressed with the times. Augustine was quickly filled with emotion when, during two-thirds of the day, she observed the even happiness—not enthusiastic it is true, but, on the other hand, unruffled—that this well-assorted couple enjoyed. They looked upon life as a commercial enterprise in which it behooved them, before everything else, to do credit to their business. Meeting with no extreme love from her husband, the wife set herself to

create it. Led unconsciously to respect and cherish Virginie, the time that happiness took to dawn for Joseph Lebas and his wife was a pledge of duration. So when the plaintive Augustine disclosed her miserable situation she had to endure the deluge of commonplaces with which the ethics of the Rue Saint-Denis supplied her sister.

"The mischief is done, my wife," said Joseph Lebas, "we must try to give good advice to our sister."

And then the skilful merchant thoroughly analyzed the resources that the laws and customs might offer as an escape for Augustine in this crisis; he numbered all the considerations, so to speak, arranged them according to their efficiency in a species of category, as if it were a question of merchandise of divers qualities, then he balanced them, weighed them, and concluded by explaining the necessity for his sister-in-law to take a strong course, which did not satisfy the love she still felt for her husband; indeed, this sentiment revived in all its force when she heard Joseph Lebas talk of legal proceedings. Augustine thanked her two friends, and returned home more undecided than she had been before she consulted them. She then ventured to the old house in the Rue du Colombier, with the intention of confiding her misfortunes to her father and mother, for she was like a sick person who, in a state of despair, tries all receipts and even relies upon the remedies of an old woman. The old couple welcomed their daughter with an

effusion that touched her. Her visit brought them a distraction which to them was worth a fortune. For four years they had gone through life like mariners without aim or compass. Seated by their fireside they would remind each other of all the disasters of the Maximum, their bygone purchases of cloth, the way in which they had avoided bankruptcy, and, above all, the celebrated failure of Lecoq, old Guillaume's Battle of Marengo. And then, when they had exhausted the old lawsuits, they would recapitulate the additions to their most profitable inventories, and would tell each other once more the old stories of the Quartier Saint-Denis. At two o'clock, old Guillaume would go and cast an eye over the establishment of the *Cat and Racket;* on his way home, he would stop at all the shops, formerly his rivals, whose young proprietors hoped to draw the old merchant into some hazardous discount, which, as was his wont, he never positively refused. Two good Normandy horses were dying of fat in the stables of the mansion; they were never used except to draw Madame Guillaume every Sunday to the High Mass of her parish. Three times a week this worthy couple held open house. Thanks to the influence of his son-in-law Sommervieux, old Guillaume had been appointed member of the consulting committee for the clothing of the troops. Since her husband's promotion to such an important place in the administration, Madame Guillaume determined to keep up appearances; her apartments were crowded with so

many gold and silver ornaments, and tasteless but certainly valuable furniture, that the simplest room resembled a chapel. Economy and extravagance seemed to be struggling in each accessory of this house. One might have thought that Monsieur Guillaume had invested in silver even down to the acquisition of a candlestick. In the middle of this bazaar, the wealth of which betrayed the leisure of husband and wife, Sommervieux's celebrated picture had been given the place of honor, and was the comfort of Monsieur and Madame Guillaume, who, twenty times a day, would turn their spectacled eyes towards this likeness of their former existence, which for them had been so active and amusing. The aspect of this house and these rooms where all was redolent of old age and mediocrity; the spectacle presented by these two beings who seemed to be stranded upon a golden rock far from the world and all life-giving thought, surprised Augustine; she was now contemplating the second part of the picture, the first part of which had struck her at Joseph Lebas's; that of a restless though inactive life, a sort of mechanical instinctive existence like a beaver's; she then felt an indescribable pride in her sorrows, in the thought that they had sprung from a happiness of eighteen months which in her eyes was worth a thousand such lives as this whose emptiness seemed so horrible to her. But she concealed this somewhat uncharitable sentiment, and exerted for her old parents all the fresh charms of her mind and the tender coquetries revealed to

her by love, and disposed them to listen favorably to her matrimonial grievances. Old people have a weakness for this particular kind of confidence. Madame Guillaume insisted upon hearing the minutest details of this strange life, which, to her, seemed almost fictitious. *The Travels of the Baron de la Houtan,* which she was always beginning and never finishing, told her of nothing more extraordinary respecting the Canadian savages.

"What! child! your husband shuts himself up with naked women and you are simpleton enough to believe that he draws them?"

After this remark the grandmother placed her glasses upon a little workbox, shook her skirts and folded her hands upon her knees that were raised on a footwarmer, her favorite pedestal.

"But, mother, all artists are obliged to have models."

"He took good care not to tell us all that when he proposed to you. Had I known it, I would never have given my daughter to a man who followed such a trade. Religion forbids such horrors, it is immoral. At what hour did you say he comes in?"

"Well, at one or two o'clock—"

Husband and wife looked at each other in profound astonishment.

"Does he gamble then?" said Monsieur Guillaume, "in my time it was only gamblers who came home so late."

Augustine's face repudiated this accusation.

"He must make you spend some cruel nights waiting for him," continued Madame Guillaume, "but no, you go to bed, do you not? And when he has lost, the monster wakes you up."

"No, mother, on the contrary, he is sometimes very cheerful. Very often even, when it is fine, he wants me to get up and go in the woods."

"In the woods, at those hours? You must have very small apartments that he should not be content with his room, or his salon, and must run out to—But the rascal proposes these excursions to give you cold. He wants to get rid of you. Did one ever see a married man, with a peaceful trade, galloping round like this as if he were a surly dog? "

"But, mother, you do not understand that he needs excitement to develop his talents. He loves scenes that—"

"Ah! I'd make some fine scenes for him, I would!" cried Madame Guillaume, interrupting her daughter, "how can you keep house with such a man? To begin with I object to his drinking nothing but water. It is not healthy. Why does he object to seeing women eat? What an extraordinary creature! But he must be mad—All that you tell us is impossible. A man cannot leave his house without breathing a word and only return ten days afterwards. He told you that he went to Dieppe to paint the sea; does one paint the sea? He tells you nonsensical stories."

Augustine was opening her lips to defend her husband, but Madame Guillaume silenced her with

a gesture which from force of habit she obeyed, and her mother exclaimed sharply:

"Look here, don't talk to me of such a man! he has never set foot inside a church except to stare at you and to marry you. People without religion are capable of anything. Has Guillaume ever seen fit to hide anything from me; to remain three days without saying a word and then to chatter like a blind magpie?"

"My dear mother, you judge clever people too harshly. If they had the same ideas as other people they would no longer be talented."

"Well then, let talented people stay at home and not marry. What! a talented man makes his wife miserable! and because he has talent it is right? Talent! talent! It does not require much talent to blow hot and cold every minute as he does, to cut people short, to behave cruelly at home, to drive you to your wit's end, to prevent a woman amusing herself until monsieur is in a good temper, to be sad when he is sad."

"But, mother, the characteristic of these imaginations—"

"And what are these imaginations?" resumed Madame Guillaume, again interrupting her daughter. "Faith! he has some fine ones. What is a man who is suddenly seized with a whim for eating nothing but vegetables, without a doctor's advice? Still, if it were for religion, his diet might be of some good to him; but he has no more than a Huguenot. Has one ever known a man who loves

his horses, as he does, more than his fellow creatures, curl his hair like a heathen, lay statues under muslin, and shut up the windows by day so as to work by lamplight? Oh! don't talk to me; if he were not so grossly immoral he would be fit for the madhouse. Consult Monsieur Loraux, the Vicar of Saint-Sulpice, ask his opinion of all this, and he will tell you that your husband does not behave like a Christian—"

"Oh! mother can you believe—"

"Yes, I do believe it! You loved him and were blind to these things. But about the early days of his marriage, I recollected having met him in the Champs-Elysées. He was riding. Well, at times he would go at full gallop, then he would stop and go at a walk. I then said to myself, 'There goes a man who has no judgment.'"

"Ah!" cried Monsieur Guillaume, rubbing his hands, "how right I was to insist upon your having a separate estate from that oddity!"

When Augustine was imprudent enough to relate the real grievances that she had to disclose against her husband, the aged couple were mute with indignation. The word "divorce" was very soon pronounced by Madame Guillaume. At the mention of divorce the indolent merchant became like one awakened. Stimulated by his love for his daughter as much as by the excitement that the prospect of a lawsuit would bring into his uneventful life, old Guillaume began to speak.

He headed the application for divorce, directed it,

and almost pleaded, he offered to be responsible for all the expenses, to see the judges, solicitors and barristers, to move heaven and earth. Madame de Sommervieux, terrified, refused her father's help, said that she would not be separated from her husband were she ten times more unhappy, and spoke no more of her troubles. After her parents had overwhelmed her with all the little dumb and comforting attentions with which they vainly attempted to compensate her for her aching heart, Augustine left, feeling how impossible it is to obtain a fair judgment for great men from those of a weaker intelligence. She learnt that a wife had better conceal from the whole world, even from parents, those troubles that so rarely meet with any sympathy. The storms and sufferings in higher spheres are only appreciated by the lofty spirits who inhabit them. We can only be judged in everything by our equals.

Poor Augustine found herself thus once more in the chilly atmosphere of her home, abandoned to the horror of her thoughts. She no longer cared to study since it had failed to restore her husband's love. Initiated into the mysteries of these fiery souls, but deprived of their resources, she shared abundantly in their sufferings without partaking of their pleasures. She was disgusted with society which seemed to her mean and petty beside the issues of passion. In fact, her life was a failure. One evening, she was struck with a thought that came like a heavenly ray to shine upon her gloomy

sorrow. Only a heart as pure and virtuous as her own could have been pleased with this idea. She resolved to go to the Duchesse de Carigliano, not to ask her to give back her husband's affections, but to acquaint herself with the wiles that had stolen them away, to interest this proud woman of the world in the mother of her friend's children, to soften her, and make her a party to her future happiness as she now was the instrument of her present misery. So one day, the timid Augustine, armed with a supernatural courage, drove in her carriage at two o'clock to attempt an entry into the boudoir of this famous coquette, who was invisible up to that hour. Madame de Sommervieux was not yet familiar with the old and sumptuous houses of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. When she traversed the stately vestibules, the grand staircases, the immense reception rooms, filled with flowers in spite of the severity of the winter, and decorated with the taste peculiar to women who are born in the midst of wealth or with the distinguished ways of the aristocracy, Augustine's heart grew terribly heavy; she envied the secret of this elegance of which she had never had a notion, she breathed an air of grandeur which explained to her the attraction this house possessed for her husband. When she reached the private apartments of the duchess, she felt jealousy and a kind of despair mingling with her admiration of the voluptuous arrangements of furniture, draperies and hangings. Here, disorder was a charm; and luxury affected a species of scorn

of wealth. The perfumes that filled this soft atmosphere pleased the sense of smell without offending it. The accessories of the room harmonized with a view, obtained through a reflecting mirror, of the lawn of a garden planted with green trees. It was all fascinating, with no perceptible effort. The genius of the mistress of these apartments pervaded the whole salon in which Augustine was waiting. She tried to guess the character of her rival from the appearance of the things scattered about; but there was something impenetrable alike in the confusion and the symmetry, and to the simple Augustine they were secrets. All that she could gather from them was that the duchess was as clever as she was womanly. Then a sad thought came to her.

"Alas! can it be true," she said to herself, "that a loving and simple heart is not enough for an artist, and, to balance the weight of these great minds, must they be united to feminine minds that are as powerful as their own? Had I been brought up like this siren, at least our weapons would have been equal in the fight."

"But I am not at home."

These curt, sharp words, although spoken in a low voice in the adjoining boudoir, were overheard by Augustine, whose heart quaked.

"But the lady is there," answered the lady's maid.

"How stupid you are; show her in!" said the duchess whose softened voice suddenly assumed the

kindly accent of good breeding. Evidently she then wished to be overheard.

Augustine advanced timidly.

At the far end of this cool boudoir she saw the duchess voluptuously reclining on a green velvet ottoman placed in the centre of a kind of semicircle formed by soft folds of muslin stretched upon a yellow background. Some gilded bronze ornaments arranged with exquisite taste still further enriched this species of dais upon which the duchess was resting like some antique statue. The deep color of the velvet enhanced every means of seduction. The subdued light, so favorable to her beauty, seemed more of a reflection than a light. Some rare flowers raised their scented heads from the richest Sèvres vases. At the moment this scene met Augustine's astonished eyes, she was treading so softly that she was in time to intercept a look from the enchantress. This look seemed to say to some one at first unnoticed by the painter's wife: "Stay here, you will see a pretty woman and make it less tiresome for me." When she perceived Augustine the duchess rose and made her sit by her side.

"To what do I owe the honor of this visit, madame?" she asked with a charming smile.

"Why so much insincerity?" thought Augustine, who only bent her head in answer.

The silence was forced. The young wife saw before her one witness too many to this scene. This person was the youngest, the most elegant, and

best formed colonel in the army. His plain clothes set off the graces of his person. His lively, youthful, and just then very expressive face was rendered still more animated by small moustaches black as jet, twirled up at the ends, a thick imperial, carefully combed, whiskers and a forest of rather untidy hair. He was toying with a riding whip with a display of ease and freedom that became the satisfied expression of his physiognomy, as well as the elegance of his dress; the ribbons in his buttonhole were carelessly tied and he seemed much more proud of his appearance than of his courage. Augustine glanced from the duchess to the colonel with an appealing look that was understood.

"Well, good-bye, d'Aiglemont; we shall meet again in the Bois de Boulogne."

The siren said this as if it were the result of an agreement prior to Augustine's arrival. She accompanied the words with a threatening look which perhaps the officer deserved for the admiration he expressed in contemplating the modest flower who contrasted so well with the proud duchess. The young dandy bowed in silence, turned on his heels and gracefully left the boudoir. Augustine, watching her rival, who seemed to be following the brilliant officer with her eyes, surprised in her glance a feeling whose fleeting expressions all women know. She reflected with the deepest sorrow that her visit was going to be useless; this artificial duchess was too greedy of homage to be pitiful.

"Madame," said Augustine in broken accents,

"the application that I am now about to make to you will seem to you very extraordinary, but despair has its madness and ought to excuse all. I understand only too well why Théodore prefers your house to all others, and why your mind exercises such an influence over him. Alas! I only have to look into myself to find more than sufficient reason. But, madame, I adore my husband. Two years spent in weeping have not washed his image from *my* heart, although I may have lost his. In my distraction I dared to conceive the idea of pitting myself against you; and I come to you to ask by what means I can triumph over yourself. Oh! madame!" cried the young wife, eagerly seizing the hand that her rival let her take, "never will I pray to God for my own happiness as I will for yours, if you will help me to recover,—I do not say the love —but the friendship of Sommervieux. My only hope is in you. Ah! tell me how you have been able to please him and make him forget the early days of ——" and here, Augustine, choked by irrepressible sobs, was forced to pause. Ashamed of her weakness, she buried her face in her handkerchief, which she drenched with tears.

"Are you not childish, my dear little woman?" said the duchess, who, won over by the novelty of the scene and softened in spite of herself in receiving tribute from possibly the most perfect virtue in all Paris, took the handkerchief from the younger woman and herself wiped her eyes, murmuring caressing monosyllables with a gracious pity.

After a moment's silence, the coquette, imprisoning poor Augustine's pretty hands in her own, which possessed the rare quality of great beauty and power, said to her in a gentle, affectionate voice:

"In the first place, I would advise you not to cry like this, tears are disfiguring. One must learn to resign one's self to troubles that make one morbid, for love does not stay long upon a bed of sorrow. Melancholy has at first a certain charm that pleases, but in the long run it draws the features and withers the loveliest face. Then, our tyrants are selfish enough to will that their slaves should always be cheerful."

"Oh! madame, it is not entirely my fault that I do not feel it. Is it not dying a thousand deaths to see a cold, lifeless, and indifferent face where formerly it beamed with love and joy? I do not know how to regulate my affections."

"So much the worse, my dear little woman; but I think I already know your whole history. In the first place, you may rest assured that if your husband has been unfaithful to you, I am not his accomplice. If I set my heart upon having him in my salon, it was, I must confess, from vanity; he was famous and would go nowhere. I like you already too much to tell you all the follies he has committed on my account. I will only inform you of one, because it will perhaps help us to lead him back to you and punish him for his audacity to me. He will end by compromising me. I know the world

too well, my dear, to place myself at the mercy of too great a man. You may let them make love to you, but it is a mistake to marry them. We women can admire men of genius and enjoy them as we would a play, but live with them? Never! Why! it is like taking pleasure in going behind the scenes at the opera instead of enjoying its brilliant illusions from a box. But with you, my poor child, the mischief is done, is it not? Well then you must try to secure yourself against tyranny."

"Ah! madame! before coming in here and seeing you, I already recognized several unsuspected artifices."

"Well then, come and see me sometimes, and it will not be long before you master the science of these trifles, which, nevertheless, are rather important. To fools, the better half of life consists in externals; and, as to that, more than one man of talent finds himself a fool in spite of all his intelligence. But I dare wager that you have never known how to refuse anything to Théodore?"

"How can one refuse anything to the man one loves?"

"Poor little innocent, I should adore you for your simplicity. You must know then that the more we love the less must we let a man, especially a husband, see the extent of our passion. It is the one who loves the most who is tyrannized over, and, what is worse, is sooner or later deserted. The one who wishes to rule must—"

"What! madame? is it necessary to dissimulate?

calculate, become false, acquire an artificial character, and for always? oh! how can one live so? Can you—?"

She hesitated. The duchess smiled.

"My dear," answered the great lady gravely, "conjugal happiness, at all times, has been a speculation, a matter that requires particular attention. If you talk passion whilst I talk marriage we shall never come to an understanding. Listen to me," she continued in a confidential tone, "I have seen some of the greatest men of our time. Those who are married, are with very few exceptions, united to women who are nonentities. Well, these very women rule them as we are ruled by the Emperor, and, if they are not loved, they are at least respected. I am fond enough of mysteries, above all, those that concern ourselves, to have amused myself seeking a solution to this enigma. Well, my angel, these good wives had a talent for analyzing their husbands' characters; and without being frightened, like you, at their superiority, they had shrewdly remarked the qualities which they themselves lacked; and, whether they really possessed such accomplishments or whether they pretended to possess them, they found means of making such a display of them to their husbands that they ended by deceiving them. In short, let me tell you once more that these seemingly great souls all have some little grain of foolishness that we ought to know how to cultivate. By firmly resolving to govern them, by never swerving from this end, by bringing

all our actions, our ideas and our coquetries to bear accordingly, we master these eminently capricious minds, who, from the very instability of their thoughts, give us the means wherewith to influence them."

"Heavens!" cried the horrified wife. "Such then is life! It is a fight—"

"In which you must always threaten," answered the duchess laughing. "Our power is entirely imaginary. You must also never let a man despise you; it is impossible to retrieve such a downfall save by odious tactics. Come," she added, "I will give you a means with which you may enchain your husband."

She rose smiling to guide the young and innocent apprentice to these conjugal stratagems, through the mazes of her miniature palace. They both came to a private staircase, communicating with the reception rooms. When the duchess had turned the secret lock of the door she stopped and looked at Augustine with an inimitably arch and charming air.

"See here! the Duc de Carigliano adores me. Well, he dare not pass this door without my permission. And he is a man who is accustomed to commanding thousands of soldiers. He knows how to face a battery; but—before me—he is afraid."

Augustine sighed. They came to a sumptuous gallery, where the duchess led the artist's wife to the portrait Théodore had painted of Mademoiselle Guillaume. At this sight Augustine gave a cry.

"I knew it was no longer at home," she said, "but—here!"

"My dear little one, I only exacted it to see what degree of stupidity a man of genius could attain. Sooner or later I should have returned it to you, for I did not expect the pleasure of seeing the original here before the copy. Whilst we finish our conversation I will have it put in your carriage. If, armed with this talisman, you are not mistress of your husband for a hundred years, you are not a woman, and you deserve your fate!"

Augustine kissed the hand of the duchess, who pressed her to her heart and kissed her with a tenderness that was all the more lively in that it would be forgotten the next day. This scene would perhaps have forever ruined the candor and purity of a less virtuous woman than Augustine, to whom the secrets revealed by the duchess might have been equally salutary or disastrous, for the astute policy of the higher social spheres pleased Augustine no better than Joseph Lebas's narrow reasoning or Madame Guillaume's foolish moralizing. Strange result of the false positions in which we are placed by the least mistake in life! Augustine at this moment resembled a shepherd overtaken by an avalanche on the Alps; if he hesitates or listens to his companion's cries, he is generally lost. In so great a crisis the heart either breaks or hardens.

Madame de Sommervieux reached home in a state of agitation difficult to describe. Her conversation with the Duchesse de Carigliano had

awakened a crowd of conflicting ideas. It was like the sheep in the fable: brave enough in the wolf's absence, she lectured herself and laid out admirable plans for her behavior; she imagined a thousand coquettish stratagems; she even spoke to her husband, recovering, away from him, all the resources of the genuine eloquence that never deserts a woman; then, thinking of Théodore's fixed, keen eye, she already trembled. Her voice failed when she asked if monsieur was at home. When she heard that he would not be in to dinner, she felt an unaccountable relief; like a criminal who obtains an appeal against sentence of death, any delay no matter how short, seemed to her an entire lifetime. She placed the portrait in her room, and waited for her husband in all the agonies of expectation. She foresaw only too well that this attempt was to decide her whole future, not to shiver at every kind of noise, even at the murmur of the clock that only seemed to augment her terrors in timing them. She tried to kill time by a thousand devices. She hit upon the idea of dressing herself exactly like the portrait. Then, knowing her husband's inquiring nature, she had her room lighted in an unusual manner, feeling certain that when he came in curiosity would bring him to her. Midnight sounded when, at the postilion's cry, the door of the house opened. The artist's carriage rumbled over the pavement of the quiet court.

"What does this illumination mean?" asked Théodore joyfully entering his wife's room.

Augustine skilfully seizing so favorable a moment, threw her arms round her husband's neck and pointed to the portrait.

The artist stood as still as a rock, looking alternately at Augustine and the tell-tale canvas. The timid wife, half-dead, who was watching the changing terrible brow, saw the portentous frown gathering like the clouds; then she thought her blood would have curdled in her veins when with a flaming look and a deep hollow voice she was asked:

"Where did you find this picture?"

"The Duchesse de Carigliano returned it to me."

"You asked her for it?"

"I did not know she had it."

The sweetness or rather the bewitching melody of this angel voice would have softened a savage, but not an artist who was suffering the tortures of wounded vanity.

"It is just like her!" thundered the artist, "I'll have my revenge," he said, striding up and down, "she shall die of shame; I will paint her! Yes! I will exhibit her with the features of Messalina stealing by night from the palace of Claudius."

"Théodore!"—faltered a faint voice.

"I'll kill her!"

"My love!"

"She loves this little cavalry colonel because he rides well—"

"Théodore!"

"Eh! leave me!" said the artist to his wife in a voice that was almost a roar.

THE DUCHESS AND AUGUSTINE

They came to a sumptuous gallery, where the duchess led the artist's wife to the portrait Théodore had painted of Mademoiselle Guillaume. At this sight Augustine gave a cry.

"I knew it was no longer at home," she said, "but—here!"

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It would be invidious to describe this scene, in which the frenzy of rage drove the artist to words and acts that a less experienced woman than Augustine would have attributed to insanity.

The next day at eight in the morning, Madame Guillaume found her daughter, with a white face, red eyes and disordered hair, holding a tear-soaked handkerchief, staring at the scattered fragments of a torn canvas and the remnants of a big gilt frame that lay in pieces on the floor. Augustine, almost unconscious from grief, pointed to the wreck with a gesture full of despair.

"There's a loss!" cried the old regent of the *Cat and Racket;* "it certainly was a good likeness; but I hear there is a man on the boulevard who makes charming portraits for fifty écus."

"Oh! mother!"—

"Poor little one, you are quite right!" answered Madame Guillaume, who misinterpreted the meaning of the look her daughter gave her.—"Come, my child, one is never loved so tenderly as by one's mother. My darling! I can guess all; but come and tell me all your troubles, I will comfort you. Did I not tell you that man was mad? Your maid has told me some fine tales—But he must be a regular monster!"

Augustine put her finger to her pale lips, as if imploring her mother to be silent for a moment. During this awful night, sorrow had taught her that patient resignation which, in mothers and women who love, surpasses human strength in its results

and, it may be, reveals the existence of certain chords in a woman's heart that God has denied to men.

An inscription cut on a tombstone in the cemetery Montmartre tells that Madame de Sommervieux died at the age of twenty-seven. In the simple lines of this epitaph, a friend of this timid creature sees the last scene of a drama. Every year, on the solemn day of the second of November, he never passes this early grave without asking himself whether the powerful grasp of genius does not require a stronger woman than was Augustine.

"It may be," he said to himself, "that lowly, modest flowers born in the valleys die when they are transplanted too close to the skies, in regions where tempests are formed and the sun scorches."

Maffliers, October, 1829.

THE DANCE AT SCEAUX

TO HENRI DE BALZAC,

His brother

HONORÉ.

THE DANCE AT SCEAUX

*

The Comte de Fontaine, head of one of the oldest families of Poitou, had intelligently and bravely served the cause of the Bourbons during the war waged against the Republic by the Vendeans. After escaping all the dangers which threatened the Royalist leaders during this stormy period of contemporary history, he would say gaily:

"I am one of those who were killed on the steps of the throne!"

This joke bore some truth from a man who had been left for dead on the bloody day of the Quatre-Chemins. Although ruined by confiscations, this loyal Vendean constantly refused the lucrative posts offered him by the Emperor Napoleon. Faithful to his aristocratic creed, he had blindly followed its maxims when he deemed it convenient to choose a wife. In spite of the allurements of a rich revolutionary parvenu who set a high price on this alliance, he married a Mademoiselle de Kergarouët, penniless, but of one of the oldest families in Brittany.

The Restoration found Monsieur de Fontaine encumbered with a large family. Although it never entered the generous gentleman's head to solicit favors, nevertheless, yielding to his wife's wishes, he left his estate, whose small revenue barely sufficed

for the needs of his children, and came to Paris. Saddened by the avidity with which his former comrades scrambled for constitutional posts and titles, he was on the point of returning to his property, when he received an official letter, in which a rather well-known Excellency informed him of his appointment to the rank of Field-Marshal, in pursuance of the decree which allowed officers of the Catholic forces to count the first twenty years of the reign of Louis XVIII. as years of service. Several days after, the Vendean still further received, without any application, and officially, the Cross of the Legion of Honor and that of Saint-Louis. Shaken in his resolution by these successive favors, which he believed due to the monarch's recollection of him, he was no longer content with leading his family, as he had hitherto religiously done, every Sunday, to cry, "Vive le roi!"—in the Hall of the Marshals, at the Tuileries, when the princes were going to chapel,—he begged the favor of a special interview. This audience, very promptly granted, was in no sense private. The royal salon was full of old servants whose powdered heads, looked at from a certain height, were like a carpet of snow. There, the nobleman recognized some old companions who received him with somewhat cold looks; but the princes seemed to him *adorable,* an enthusiastic expression which escaped him when the most gracious of his masters, to whom the count believed himself only known by name, came and squeezed his hand and declared him to be the truest of the Vendeans.

In spite of this ovation, not one of these august personages had any idea of asking him for an account of his losses or of the money so generously poured into the coffers of the Catholic army. He perceived, a little too late, that he had fought at his own expense.

Toward the end of the evening, he thought he might risk a witty allusion to the state of his affairs, similar to those of many other gentlemen. His Majesty laughed heartily enough,—every word bearing the stamp of wit had the advantage of pleasing him—but he replied, nevertheless, with one of those royal jests whose gentleness is more formidable than the anger of a reprimand. One of the king's most intimate confidants lost no time in approaching the scheming Vendean, to whom he intimated, in a subtle, polished phrase, that the time for settling with the rulers had not yet arrived; there were on hand several accounts much more in arrears than his own, and that were no doubt likely to form the history of the Revolution.

The count discreetly retired from the venerable group forming a respectful semicircle before the august family; then, after having, not without difficulty, disengaged his sword from amongst the slender legs in which it had become entangled, he walked across the court of the Tuileries to the cab he had left on the quay. With the restive spirit that distinguished the noblemen of the old stamp whose memory of the League and the Barricades was not yet dimmed, he complained in the cab,

aloud and in a compromising manner, about the change that had taken place at Court.

"Formerly," he said to himself, "everyone talked freely to the king of his little affairs, the seigneurs could ask favors and money of him when they pleased, and to-day is it to be an offence to seek the reimbursement of sums raised for his service? 'Sdeath! the Cross of Saint-Louis and the rank of Field-Marshal are not worth the three hundred thousand pounds that I spent in fine style in the royal cause. I shall speak to the king again, to his face, and in his cabinet."

This occurrence chilled Monsieur de Fontaine's zeal all the more as his requests for an audience always remained unanswered. Moreover, he saw the intruders of the Empire succeeding to some of the offices which, under the ancient monarchy, had been reserved for the higher families.

"All is lost," he said to himself one morning, "decidedly, the king has never been anything but a revolutionary. But for monsieur, who never degrades himself and who consoles his faithful servants, I do not know into whose hands the crown of France might not fall if this régime continues. Their cursed constitutional system is the very worst of all governments, and can never answer in France. Louis XVIII. and Monsieur Beugnot spoiled everything for us at Saint-Ouen."

In despair the count was preparing to return to his estate, nobly abandoning his claims to any indemnity. At this moment, the events of the

twentieth of March foretold a fresh storm that threatened to ingulf the lawful king and his supporters. Like those generous people who never dismiss a servant on a rainy day, Monsieur de Fontaine borrowed from his estate to follow the overthrown monarchy, not knowing whether this participation in emigration would be any more propitious to him than his past devotion had been; but, after having observed that the companions in exile were in greater favor than the heroes who had formerly protested, sword in hand, against the establishment of the Republic, he may perhaps have hoped to profit more by this journey abroad than by an active and perilous service at home. His courtier-like calculations were not any of those empty speculations that promise such superb results on paper, and ruin in their fulfillment. He was, therefore, according to the saying of one of our wittiest and cleverest diplomatists, one of the five hundred faithful servants who shared the court's exile at Ghent, and one of the fifty thousand who returned. During this short absence of royalty, Monsieur de Fontaine had the good fortune to be employed by Louis XVIII., and hit upon more than one occasion of giving the king proofs of great political honesty and sincere attachment.

One evening when the monarch had nothing better to do, he recalled the *bon mot* said by Monsieur de Fontaine at the Tuileries. The old Vendean did not let such an opportunity escape, and related his story ingeniously enough so that the king, who

never forgot anything, might remember it in due time. The august scholar remarked the shrewd turn given to some reports, the drawing up of which had been intrusted to the discreet nobleman. This little accomplishment inscribed Monsieur de Fontaine in the king's memory, as being amongst the most loyal servants of his crown. Upon the second return, the count was one of those special envoys who traveled through the districts, with authority to absolutely judge the abettors of the rebellion; but he used his terrible power moderately. As soon as this temporary magistracy ceased, the grand-marshal took one of the seats in the Council of State, became deputy, spoke little, listened much, and considerably changed his opinions. Several circumstances, unknown to biographers, advanced him sufficiently in the prince's intimacy, for the malicious monarch to thus address him one day as he came in:

"Friend Fontaine, I would not presume to appoint you director-general or minister! Neither you nor I, if we were *officials,* would keep our places, on account of our opinions. The representative government is so far good in that it saves us the trouble we formerly had in ourselves dismissing our Secretaries of State. Our council is a veritable inn, to which public opinion often sends us queer travelers; but after all we shall always know where to find a place for our faithful servants."

This mocking overture was followed by an order giving Monsieur de Fontaine an administration in the domain extraordinary of the Crown. In

consequence of the intelligent attention with which he would listen to the sarcasms of his royal friend, his name was on His Majesty's lips every time that it became necessary to create a commission whose members were to be lucratively paid. He had the good sense to say nothing of the favor with which the monarch honored him and knew how to preserve it by a piquant manner of narrating, in one of those familiar chats in which Louis XVIII. delighted as much as in agreeably written notes, political anecdotes, or, if one may use such an expression, the diplomatic or parliamentary *cancans* which abounded at that time. It is well known that the details of his *gouvernementabilité*—a word adopted by the august jester—amused him infinitely. Thanks to the good sense, intelligence and shrewdness of Monsieur le Comte de Fontaine, every member of his numerous family, however young he might be, finished—as he humorously remarked to his master—by alighting like a silk worm on the leaves of the budget. Thus, through the kindness of the king, his eldest son attained an eminent position in the permanent magistracy. The second, a plain captain before the Restoration, obtained an order immediately after his return from Ghent; then, favored by the agitations of 1815, during which regulations were disregarded, he passed into the Royal Guard, repassed into the body guard, returned to the line, and, after the affair of the Trocadéro found himself a lieutenant-general with a command in the guard. The youngest, appointed sub-prefect, soon became

maître des requêtes and director of a municipal administration of the city of Paris, where he found himself secure from legislative storms. These quiet favors, secret as the preference bestowed upon the count, showered down unremarked.

Although the father and the three sons might each have had sinecures enough to enjoy an income from the budget almost equal to that of a director-general, their political success excited nobody's envy. In these early days of the first establishment of the constitutional system, very few people had any accurate ideas concerning the peaceful regions of the budget, where shrewd favorites knew how to find an equivalent for their ruined abbeys. Monsieur le Comte de Fontaine, who but lately boasted that he had not read the Charter and showed so much bitterness against the avidity of the courtiers, was not long in proving to his august master that he understood the character and resources of the *representative* as well as he did. And yet, in spite of the security of the careers opened to his three sons, in spite of the pecuniary advantages resulting from the holding of the four positions, Monsieur de Fontaine was the head of too numerous a family to be able to re-establish his fortunes either promptly or easily. His three sons were rich in prospects, favor and talent; but he had three daughters and feared to weary the king's kindness. He contrived to speak of only one of these virgins who were in such haste to light their torches. The king had too much good taste to leave his work incomplete. The marriage

of the eldest with a collector-general, Planat de Baudry, was decided by one of those royal phrases that cost nothing and are worth millions.

One evening when the monarch was out of humor, he smiled at learning the existence of another demoiselle de Fontaine, whom he married to a young magistrate, of bourgeois extraction, it is true, but rich, full of talent, and whom he created a baron. When, the following year, the Vendean mentioned Mademoiselle Emilie de Fontaine, the king replied, in his little sour voice:

"Amicus Plato, sed magis amica Natio."

Then, several days after, he regaled his *friend Fontaine* with a somewhat silly quatrain that he called an epigram and in which he rallied him on his three daughters so cleverly produced in the form of a trinity. If history is to be believed, the monarch had sought his *bon mot* in the unity of the three divine beings.

"If only the King would deign to change his epigram into an epithalamium?" said the count, trying to turn this fancy to his own advantage.

"If I see the rhyme, I do not see the reason," answered the King stiffly, in no way relishing this joke upon his poetry, however mild it might be.

From that day, his dealings with Monsieur de Fontaine were less gracious. Kings are more given to perversity than one would think. Like almost all youngest children, Emilie de Fontaine was a Benjamin, spoiled by everyone. The monarch's coolness caused the count all the more pain in that

there never was a more difficult marriage to arrange than that of this darling daughter. To understand all these obstacles, it is necessary to penetrate within the precincts of the beautiful house in which the administrator lived at the expense of the Civil List. Emilie had spent her childhood on the Fontaine estate enjoying the abundance that suffices for the early pleasures of youth; her least wishes were law to her sisters, brothers, her mother and even her father. All her relations doted upon her.

Arriving at a sensible age just at the time when her family was loaded with fortune's favors, the enchantment of her life continued. The luxuries of Paris seemed to her quite as natural as the profusion of flowers and fruit and the rural wealth that constituted the happiness of her early years. Just as she had met with no sort of contradiction when in childhood she wished to satisfy her glad desires, so she found herself obeyed when at fourteen years of age she was launched into the vortex of society. Thus gradually accustomed to the gratifications of wealth, refinement of dress, elegance of gilded salons and carriages, became as necessary to her as the genuine or false compliments of flattery, as the entertainments and vanities of the Court. Like most spoiled children, she tyrannized over those who loved her, and reserved her coquetries for those who were indifferent to her. Her faults only grew in proportion as she did, and her parents were soon to reap the bitter fruits of this fatal training. At nineteen Emilie de Fontaine had not yet made her

choice from amongst the numerous young men that Monsieur de Fontaine's policy assembled at their entertainments. Although still very young, she enjoyed in society all the independence that a woman can have. Like kings, she had no friends, and found herself everywhere an object of attention of which a better disposition than her own would perhaps not have been able to stand the test. No man, not even an old one, had the strength to contradict the opinions of a young girl whose mere glance could awaken love in a cold heart. Brought up with more care than her sisters, she painted fairly well, spoke Italian and English, and played the piano in the most distracting manner; lastly, her voice, improved by the best masters, had a tone that gave irresistible charm to her singing. Intellectual and fed upon every kind of literature, she might have made one believe, as Mascarille says, that people of rank come into the world fully educated. She argued fluently about Italian or Flemish painting, on the Middle Ages or the Renaissance; judged old or new books indiscriminately, and brought out the faults in a work with cruel charm of wit. Her simplest sentence was received by the adoring crowd as the Turks would a *fetfa* of the Sultan. In this way she dazzled artificial people; as to more profound persons, her natural tact helped her to recognize them; and for them she would display so much coquetry that, by the help of her charms, she could escape their examination. This fascinating polish covered an indifferent heart, the

opinion, common to many young girls, that nobody lived in a sufficiently exalted sphere to understand her perfection of mind, and a pride that relied as much upon her birth as her beauty. In the absence of any strong feeling which sooner or later lays waste a woman's heart, she spent her youthful ardor in an immoderate love of distinction, and showed the deepest contempt for commoners. Very impertinent to the new nobility, she strove her utmost so that her parents should rank on an equal footing with the most illustrious families of the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

These sentiments had not escaped Monsieur de Fontaine's observing eye, who more than once, at the time of the marriage of his two eldest daughters, had had to lament Emilie's sarcasms and witticisms. Logical persons would have been astonished to have seen the old Vendean giving his eldest daughter to a collector-general who, it is true, possessed several old manorial estates, but whose name was not preceded by that particle to which the throne owed so many defenders, and the second to a magistrate too recently created baron to overlook the fact that the father had sold fagots. This remarkable change in the noble's ideas just when he was attaining his sixtieth year, a period at which men rarely abandon their beliefs, was not only due to the deplorable residence in modern Babylon, where all provincial people end by losing their crudeness; the Comte de Fontaine's new political conscience was still more the result of the king's advice and

friendship. This philosopher prince had delighted in converting the Vendean to the ideas exacted by the progress of the nineteenth century and the renovation of the monarchy. Louis XVIII. wanted to blend parties as Napoléon had blended things and men. The legitimate king, perhaps as clever as his rival, proceeded the reverse way. The last head of the House of Bourbon was as eager to please the commons and the people of the Empire, by repressing the clergy, as the first of the Napoléons had been anxious to win over the great noblemen and to endow the Church. Confident of the royal opinion, the Councillor of State had insensibly become one of the most influential and wisest heads of the moderate party that earnestly desired, in the name of national interest, the merging of opinions. He preached the expensive principles of constitutional government and promoted with all his power the game of political seesaw that enabled his master to govern France in the midst of agitations. Perhaps Monsieur de Fontaine flattered himself he could attain the peerage by one of those legislative squalls whose strange effects at that time surprised the oldest politicians. One of his most fixed principles consisted in no longer recognizing any other nobility in France than the peerage, whose families were the only ones who had privileges.

"A nobility without privileges," he said, "is a handle without a knife."

As far removed from La Fayette's party as from that of De la Bourdonnaye, he zealously undertook

a general reconciliation from which a new era and a brilliant destiny for France was to arise. He tried to convince the families who frequented fashionable circles and those he visited, of the few favorable chances afforded in future by a military career or the administration. He persuaded mothers to launch their children into independent and industrial professions, by giving them to understand that military offices and the higher functions of the government would finally belong quite constitutionally to the younger sons of noble families in the peerage. According to him, the nation had acquired so large a share in the administration by its elective assembly, by offices in the magistracy and those in finance, which, said he, would always be as formerly the appanage of notabilities of the commons. The new ideas of the head of the De Fontaine family and the wise alliances resulting from them for his two elder girls, had met with vigorous resistance in the heart of his household. The Comtesse de Fontaine remained faithful to the old beliefs, which could not be renounced by a woman who belonged to the Rohans on her mother's side. Although she was for a while opposed to the happiness and good fortune in store for her two elder daughters, she submitted to those secret considerations that husband and wife confide to each other, when their heads rest upon the same pillow. Monsieur de Fontaine coldly demonstrated to his wife, by close calculations, that living in Paris, the necessity of keeping up appearances there, the splendor of the

house which compensated them for the privations so bravely shared in the depths of La Vendée, the outlay spent upon their sons, absorbed the greater part of their budgetary revenue. So they must seize, as a heaven-sent favor, the chance offered them of providing so richly for their daughters. Would they not one day enjoy sixty, eighty, a hundred thousand francs income? Such advantageous marriages were not to be met with every day for dowerless girls. In short, it was time to think of economizing to improve the estate of De Fontaine and to re-establish the old territorial fortune of the family. The comtesse yielded to such persuasive arguments, as all mothers would have done in her place, although perhaps with a better grace; but she declared that her daughter Emilie, at least, should marry in such a way as to satisfy the pride which she had unfortunately contributed to develop in this young soul.

Thus the events that ought to have bestowed happiness upon this family introduced a slight leaven of discord. The collector-general and the young magistrate were objects of a chill ceremony that the comtesse and her daughter Emilie were well-skilled in. Their etiquette found ample ground for exercising their domestic tyrannies; the lieutenant-general married Mademoiselle Mongenod, daughter of a rich banker; the president very sensibly married a young lady whose father, millionaire two or three times over, had traded in salt; finally, the third brother proved his adherence to his

plebeian doctrines by taking to wife Mademoiselle Grossetête, only daughter of the collector-general at Bourges. The three sisters-in-law and the two brothers-in-law found so many charms and personal advantages in remaining in the lofty sphere of political magnates and in the circles of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, that they all united in forming a small court around the haughty Emilie This treaty between interest and pride was, nevertheless, not so well cemented but that the young sovereign often excited revolutions in her little State. Scenes, that good breeding could not retract, maintained between all the members of this influential family a scoffing disposition, which without perceptibly altering the friendship shown in public, in private sometimes degenerated into not very charitable sentiments. Thus the wife of the lieutenant-general, now a baroness, believed herself quite as noble as a Kergarouët and presumed that a hundred thousand francs solid income gave her the right to be as impertinent as her sister-in-law Emilie, to whom she often ironically wished a happy marriage in announcing to her that the daughter of such and such a peer had just married some plain *monsieur* so-and-so. The wife of the Vicomte de Fontaine amused herself by surpassing Emilie in the good taste and richness for which her dress, her furniture and carriages were remarkable. The mocking air with which the sisters and brothers-in-law sometimes received the pretensions made by Mademoiselle de Fontaine roused in her a wrath hardly

appeased by a shower of epigrams. When the head of the family met with any coolness in the tacit and precarious friendship of the monarch, he trembled all the more that, in consequence of the satirical defiance of her sisters, his darling daughter had never had more ambitious views.

In the midst of these circumstances, and when the little domestic fight was becoming very serious, the monarch, in whose favor Monsieur de Fontaine believed himself re-established, was attacked by the illness of which he was to die. The great politician who had so well known how to guide his vessel amidst the storms was not long in succumbing. Uncertain of the favor to come, the Count de Fontaine then made the greatest efforts to gather the most select of the marriageable young men round his youngest daughter. Those who have attempted to solve the difficult problem offered by the marriage of a proud and capricious daughter will perhaps understand the trouble taken by the poor Vendean. Had it been completed to the satisfaction of his beloved child, this last enterprise would have nobly crowned the career that the comte had pursued for ten years in Paris.

From the way in which his family usurped the salaries of all departments, they might have been compared to the House of Austria, which, by its coalition, threatens to invade all Europe. Therefore the old Vendean was not to be discouraged in presenting suitors, so much had he his daughter's happiness at heart; but nothing could be more

ludicrous than the way in which the impertinent creature passed sentence upon and judged the merits of her adorers. One would have said that like one of the princesses in the *Thousand and One Nights*, Emilie was rich enough and beautiful enough to have the right to choose amongst all the princes in the world; her objections were each more facetious than the other; one was too heavy in the legs or was knock-kneed, another was short-sighted, this one was called Durand, that one limped, nearly all seemed to her too fat. Livelier, more charming and merrier than ever after having rejected two or three suitors, she threw herself into winter festivities and ran to balls where her piercing eyes would examine the celebrities of the day, and she would amuse herself by inviting the proposals that she always declined.

Nature had endowed her richly with all the advantages indispensable to this rôle of Célimène. Tall and slender, Emilie de Fontaine possessed a bearing that was imposing or playful, as she chose. Her rather long neck allowed her to take charming attitudes of disdain and impertinence. She provided herself with an abundant repertory of those nods and feminine gestures that interpret hints and smiles so cruelly or so favorably. Beautiful black hair, thick and strongly arched eyebrows, lent her face an expression of pride that coquetry, as much as her mirror, had taught her to render terrible or to soften by the fixity or the gentleness of her look, by the immobility or the light inflections of her lips,

by the coldness or graciousness of her smile. When Emilie wanted to secure a heart, her pure voice was not wanting in sweetness, but she could at the same time impart a sort of curt clearness to it when she undertook to paralyze the indiscreet tongue of a cavalier. Her white face and snowy forehead were like the limpid surface of a lake that alternately ruffles at the touch of a breeze or resumes its joyful serenity when the air is quiet. More than one young man, a victim of her disdain, accused her of playing a part; but she would vindicate herself by inspiring the slanderers with a desire to please her and by subjecting them to the scorn of her coquetry. Amidst all the fashionable young girls, none knew better than she how to assume an air of haughtiness in receiving the salutation of a man of talent, or how to use that insulting politeness which makes inferiors of our equals, or to pour out her impertinence on all who attempted to place themselves on a level with her. She seemed, wherever she went, to receive homage rather than compliments, and even for a princess, her appearance and manners would have converted the chair in which she might be seated, into an imperial throne.

Monsieur de Fontaine discovered too late how the bringing-up of his best-loved daughter had been warped by the tenderness of the whole family. The admiration that the world first shows to a young person, but which it does not take long in avenging, had still further elated Emilie's pride, and increased her self-confidence. A universal

compliance had developed in her the egoism natural to spoiled children, who, like royalty, make fun of all who approach them. For the present, the grace of youth and the charm of talent hid from all eyes these faults, all the more odious in a woman in that she can only please by devotion and self-renunciation; but nothing escapes the eye of a good father; Monsieur de Fontaine often tried to explain to his daughter the principal pages of the enigmatical book of life. Vain attempt! he too often had to bemoan the capricious intractableness and the ironical wisdom of his daughter to persevere with so difficult a task as that of correcting so mischievous a disposition. He contented himself with occasionally giving advice full of gentleness and kindness; but he suffered the pain of seeing his tenderest words glancing over his daughter's heart as if it had been of marble. A father's eyes open so late, that it required more than one proof for the old Vendean to perceive the condescending air with which his daughter vouchsafed him scanty caresses. She was like those children, who seem to say to their mother: "Make haste and kiss me so that I may go and play." Upon the whole, Emilie deigned to have some tenderness for her parents. But often, from some sudden caprice that seems inexplicable in young girls, she would isolate herself and hardly appear; she would complain that she had to share the love of her father and mother with too many people, she became jealous of everybody, even of her brothers and sisters. Then, after

having taken great pains to produce a desert all round her, this strange girl would blame all nature for her imaginary solitude and her voluntary sufferings. Armed with her twenty years' experience she blamed fate because, not knowing that the first principle of happiness lies within ourselves, she demanded it from the realities of life. She would have fled to the ends of the earth to avoid marriages similar to those of her two sisters; and, notwithstanding, she felt an awful jealousy in her heart in seeing them married, rich, and happy. At last, she sometimes caused her mother—victim of her proceedings as much as was Monsieur de Fontaine —to think that she was a little crack-brained. This aberration was sufficiently explicable; there is nothing more common than this secret pride in the hearts of young persons belonging to families ranking high in the social ladder, and gifted by nature with great beauty. Most of them are persuaded that their mothers, having reached forty or fifty years of age, can neither sympathize with their youthful minds, nor enter into their fancies. They imagine that most mothers, jealous of their daughters, wish to dress them according to their own ideas with the premeditated design of eclipsing them or robbing them of their tribute. From this, there often arise secret tears or quiet revolt against the imaginary maternal tyranny. In the midst of these sorrows, which become real, though built upon imaginary grounds, they further have a mania for composing a theme for their existence and

prophesy for themselves a brilliant horoscope; their magic consists in taking their dreams as realities; they secretly resolve, in their lengthy meditations, that they will grant their love and hand only to the man who shall possess such and such an advantage; they form a type in their imaginations which their intended, willing or unwilling, must resemble. After having experienced life and made the serious reflections that come with years, by dint of seeing the world and its prosaic course, by dint of unhappy examples, the bright colors of their ideal figure become extinct; then they find themselves one fine day, in the course of time, quite astonished at being happy without the nuptial poetry of their dreams. According to this poetry, Mademoiselle Emilie de Fontaine had, in her frail wisdom, resolved upon a programme to which her suitor must conform in order to be accepted. Hence, her scorn and sarcasms.

"Although young and of the old nobility," she had said to herself, "he must be a peer of France or the eldest son of a peer. It would be unbearable not to see my coat-of-arms painted on the panels of my carriage in the middle of the fluttering folds of an azure mantle, and not to stroll with princes on the days of Longchamp in the great walk of the Champs-Elysées. Moreover, my father says that that will one day be the highest dignity in France. I want him to be a military man, reserving to myself the right of making him tender his resignation, and I want him to be decorated so that they may present arms to us."

These rare qualifications would be of no use if this imaginary being did not possess in addition, a great amiability, a handsome appearance, intellect, and if he were not slender.

Thinness, this grace of body, however transitory, particularly in a government representative, was a strict stipulation. Mademoiselle de Fontaine had a certain ideal standard which served as a model. The young man who, at the first glance, did not fulfill the desired conditions never obtained even a second look.

"Oh! mon Dieu! see how fat that man is!" was her highest expression of contempt.

According to her, men of a decent corpulence were incapable of sentiment, bad husbands and unworthy of entering civilized society. Although *embonpoint* might be a beauty much sought after in the East, it seemed to her a misfortune in women; but, in a man, it was a crime. These paradoxical opinions were amusing owing to a certain liveliness of elocution. Nevertheless, the count felt that later on his daughter's affectations, whose absurdity would be detected by certain women who were as clear-sighted as they were uncharitable, would become a fatal subject of ridicule. He dreaded lest his daughter's odd ideas might turn into vulgarity. He trembled lest the pitiless world should be already jeering at a person who remained so long on the scenes without giving any conclusion to the comedy she was playing. More than one actor, smarting under a refusal, seemed to be awaiting the least

unlucky incident to avenge himself. Idle and indifferent people were beginning to weary of it; admiration is always an effort for the human species. The old Vendean knew better than anyone that if it is necessary to be skilful in choosing the right moment of appearing upon the boards of society, those of the Court, in a drawing-room or on the stage, it was still more difficult to walk off opportunely. So, during the first winter following the accession of Charles X. to the throne, he redoubled his efforts, conjointly with his three sons and his sons-in-law, to assemble in his salons the best matches that Paris and the different provincial deputations could offer. The splendor of his entertainments, the magnificence of his dining-room and his dinners flavored with truffles, vied with the famous repasts with which the ministers of the period secured the votes of their parliamentary soldiers.

The honorable deputy was at that time pointed out as one of the most powerful corrupters of the legislative honesty of that illustrious Chamber which appeared to be dying of indigestion. Strange! his attempts to marry his daughter secured him a dazzling popularity. He may perhaps have found some secret advantage in selling his truffles twice over. This accusation, proceeding from certain liberal scoffers who made up for the scarcity of their adherents in the Chamber by the abundance of their words, was in no way successful. The conduct of the *poitevin* nobleman was generally so noble and so honorable, that he was never submitted to

one of those epigrams with which the spiteful journals of this period attacked the three hundred voters of the Centre, the ministers, the cooks, the directors-general, the princes of the trencher and the upholders of office who supported the Villèle administration. At the end of this campaign, during which Monsieur de Fontaine had repeatedly fought all his troops, he fancied that his collectors of suitors would not be, this time, a phantasmagoria to his daughter. He felt a certain inward satisfaction at having well fulfilled his duty as a father. Then, after having left no stone unturned, he hoped that amidst so many hearts offered to the capricious Emilie there might be found at least one whom she would single out. Incapable of renewing this effort and tired, besides, of his daughter's conduct, he resolved to consult her, towards the end of Lent, one morning when his vote was not so urgently required at the sitting of the Chamber. Whilst a valet artistically arranged upon his yellow skull the delta of powder which, with the hanging side curls, completed his venerable headdress, Emilie's father ordered his old valet-de-chambre, not without secret trepidation, to go and tell the proud young lady to appear immediately before the head of the family.

"Joseph," he said, the moment he had finished his *coiffure,* "take away this towel, pull the curtains, put those chairs in order, shake the hearthrug and put it back quite straight, wipe everything. Come now! open the window and let a little air into my closet." The count repeated his orders, put

Joseph out of breath, who, understanding his master's purpose, restored some freshness to this room which was naturally the most untidy in the whole house, and succeeded in communicating some sort of harmony to the masses of accounts, half-sheets, books and furniture of this sanctuary in which the interests of the royal domain were debated.

When Joseph had finished putting some small order into this chaos and placing conspicuously, as in a linendraper's shop, the things that might be the nicest to look at, or by their colors produce a sort of bureaucratic poetry, he stopped in the middle of the labyrinth of papers spread in some places upon the carpet, admired himself for a moment, tossed his head and went out.

The poor sinecurist did not share the good opinion of his servant. Before seating himself in his enormous armchair, he cast round a look of distrust, examined his dressing-gown with an air of hostility, brushed from it several grains of snuff, carefully wiped his nose, arranged the shovel and tongs, stirred up the fire, drew up the flaps of his slippers, threw back his little pigtail which had lodged horizontally between the collar of his vest and that of his dressing-gown, and returned it to its perpendicular position; then he gave a thrust with the broom at the cinders on a hearth that testified to the obstinacy of his catarrh. Finally the old man did not sit down until after he had once more reviewed his closet, hoping that nothing in it might call forth those equally droll and impertinent

remarks with which his daughter had a habit of answering his wise counsel. Upon this occasion he did not want to compromise his paternal dignity. He daintily took a pinch of snuff and coughed two or three times as if he were preparing to request the call of the House; he heard his daughter's light step, she came in humming an air from *Il Barbiere.*

"Good-morning, father. What do you want with me this morning?"

After these words, thrown off as if they were a flourish to the tune she was singing, she kissed the count, not with that familiar tenderness which makes the filial feeling so sweet, but with the light indifference of a mistress who is sure of pleasing, whatever she may do.

"My dear child," said Monsieur de Fontaine, gravely, "I sent for you in order to talk very seriously with you about your future. The necessity for you now to choose a husband in such a way as to ensure your lasting happiness—"

"My good father," answered Emilie, using the most caressing tone of voice to interrupt him, "it seems to me that the armistice we agreed upon regarding my suitors has not yet expired."

"Emilie, to-day let us stop joking on so important a subject. For some time, the efforts of those who truly love you, dear child, have been combined to procure you a suitable marriage and you will be guilty of ingratitude in lightly receiving the proofs of interest which I am not the only one to lavish upon you."

While listening to these words, and after darting a maliciously inquiring glance at the furniture of the paternal cabinet, the young girl went and took the chair that appeared to have been the least used by petitioners, drew it herself to the other side of the fireplace so as to face her father, struck so solemn an attitude that it was almost impossible not to see signs of derision, and crossed her arms over the rich trimming of a tippet *à la neige,* pitilessly crumpling its numerous frills of tulle. After a laughing side-glance at her old father's anxious face, she broke the silence.

"I have never heard you say, dear father, that government transacted its correspondence in a dressing-gown. But," she added, smiling, "no matter, the people must not be particular. Let us hear your legal projects and your official presentations."

"I shall not always have the patience to make them for you, foolish child! Listen, Emilie. I do not intend any longer to compromise my character, to which my children owe part of their prosperity, by recruiting this regiment of partners that you put to flight every spring. You have already been the foolish cause of many dangerous misunderstandings with certain families. I hope that you will now better understand the difficulties of your position and of ours. You are twenty-two years old, child, and you ought to have been married three years ago. Your brothers and your two sisters are all prosperously and happily settled. But, my child,

the expenses incurred in these marriages and the style of the establishment you oblige your mother to maintain have drained our income to such an extent, that I shall barely be able to give you a hundred thousand francs dowry. From to-day, I must think of your mother's future, for she ought not to be sacrificed to her children. Emilie, if I were to be taken away, Madame de Fontaine could not be left to the mercy of anyone, and must continue to enjoy the comforts with which I have too late compensated her for her devotion during my misfortunes. You see, my child, that the slenderness of your dowry could not harmonize with your ideas of grandeur. It will still be a sacrifice I have never made for any other of my children, but they have generously agreed never to take advantage of the interest we are taking in a well-beloved child."

"In their position!" said Emilie ironically, tossing her head.

"My child, never depreciate thus those who love you. You must know that only generous people are poor! The rich always have excellent reasons for not giving up twenty thousand francs to a relation. Well, don't sulk, my child, and let us talk rationally. Amongst the marriageable young men, have you not remarked Monsieur de Manerville?"

"Oh! he says '*zeu*' instead of '*jeu*,' he always looks at his feet because he thinks they are small, and looks at himself in the glass! Besides, he is fair, and I don't like fair people."

"Well then, Monsieur de Beaudenard?"

"He is not noble. He is badly made and fat. Certainly he is dark. These two gentlemen ought to agree to unite their incomes, and let the first give his body and name to the second who should keep his hair, and then—perhaps—"

"What have you against Monsieur de Rastignac?"

"Madame de Nucingen has made him her banker," she said, maliciously.

"And the Vicomte de Portenduère, our relative?"

"A boy who dances badly, and, moreover, has no money. In short, father, these men have no title. I must be at least a countess as my mother is."

"Then you have seen nobody this winter who—?"

"No, father.'

"What do you want then?"

"The son of a peer of France."

"My child, you are mad!" said Monsieur de Fontaine, rising.

But he suddenly lifted his eyes to heaven, seeming to gather a fresh measure of resignation from some religious thought; then, looking at his child with a look of fatherly pity, which became one of emotion, he took her hand, squeezed it, and said to her sadly:

"God is my witness, poor misguided creature! I have conscientiously fulfilled my duty as a father toward you—what do I say, conscientiously? with all tenderness, my Emilie. Yes, God knows, this winter I have brought you more than one upright man whose qualities, morals and character were

well-known to me, and all seemed worthy of you. My child, my task is complete. From to-day, I give you the disposal of your own lot, feeling both happy and unhappy in finding myself relieved of the heaviest of paternal obligations. I do not know if you will much longer hear a voice which, unfortunately, has never been severe; but remember that conjugal happiness is not so much based upon brilliant qualities and upon wealth, as upon a mutual esteem. This happiness is, naturally, modest and quiet. Go, my child; my approbation is insured for him whom you present to me as son-in-law; but, if you become unhappy, remember that you will have no right to accuse your father. I will not refuse to make overtures and help you; only, let your choice be serious and decisive; I will not twice endanger the respect due to my gray hairs."

The affection shown her by her father, and the solemn tone which he put into his impressive speech, deeply touched Mademoiselle de Fontaine; but she concealed her emotion, jumped on to the count's knees, who, all trembling, had seated himself, and covered him with the gentlest caresses, and petted him so charmingly that the old man's brow cleared. When Emilie thought her father had recovered from his painful emotion, she said to him in a low voice:

"Thank you very much for your kind care, dear father. You had tidied your room to receive your beloved daughter. Perhaps you did not think to find her so foolish and rebellious. But, father, is it so very difficult to marry a peer of France? You

said that they were made by the dozen. Ah! at least you will not refuse me advice."

"No, no, poor child, and I shall say more than once, 'Take care!' You must remember that the peerage is too recent a department of our *gouvernementabilité* as the late king used to say, for peers to possess any great fortunes. Those who are rich want to become still more so. The wealthiest of all the members of our peerage has not half the income possessed by the poorest lord in the Upper House in England. But, the peers of France will all seek rich heiresses for their sons, no matter where they come from. The necessity under which they all are for making money matches will last more than two centuries. It is possible that in waiting for the lucky chance you wish for, a search that may cost you your best years, your charms—for there are many marriages for love in our century—your charms, I say, may work a miracle. When experience is hidden beneath such a fresh face as yours, one may hope for marvels. In the first place, have you not a facility for recognizing virtue according to the greater or less size of the figure? That is no small accomplishment. I also need not warn so wise a person as yourself of the difficulties of the enterprise. I am certain that you will never take it for granted that a stranger has good sense because he has a pleasing face, or virtues because he has a fine shape. In fact, I am entirely of your opinion that all sons of peers are under an obligation of having a particular air and a distinctive manner.

Although now-a-days nothing stamps high rank, these young men may possess a *je ne sais quoi* which reveals them to you. Moreover, you hold your heart in hand like a good rider who never lets his horse stumble. Good luck to you, my child!"

"You are laughing at me, father. Well then, I declare I would rather go and die in Mademoiselle de Condé's convent, than not become the wife of a peer of France."

She escaped from her father's arms, and, proud of being her own mistress, went off singing the air *Cara non dubitare* from *Matrimonio Segreto*. As it happened, the family that day was celebrating the anniversary of a domestic birthday. At dessert, Madame Planat, wife of the receiver-general and Emilie's elder, spoke rather openly of a young American, owning an immense fortune, who, passionately in love with her sister, had made her an extremely brilliant offer.

"He is a banker, I think," said Emilie, carelessly. "I don't like financiers."

"But, Emilie," answered the Baron de Villaine, husband to Mademoiselle de Fontaine's second sister, "you don't like the magistracy any better, so that I hardly see, if you repulse untitled men, from what class you are to select a husband."

"Especially, Emilie, with your system of thinness," added the lieutenant-general.

"I know what I want," answered the young girl.

"My sister requires a fine name, a handsome young man, a brilliant future," said the Baronne de

Fontaine, "and a hundred thousand francs income; in short, Monsieur de Marsay, for instance!"

"I know, my dear sister," returned Emilie, "that I shall not make such an absurd marriage as many that I have seen. However, to avoid these nuptial discussions, I declare that I shall look upon those who talk to me of marriage as inimical to my peace."

An uncle of Emilie's, a vice-admiral who in consequence of the law of indemnity had just increased his fortune by an income of twenty thousand pounds, an old septuagenarian who was privileged to say hard truths to his great-niece, whom he adored, cried, in order to divert the sharpness of this conversation:

"Don't tease my poor Emilie! don't you see she is waiting for the Duc de Bordeaux's coming of age?"

A general laugh greeted the old man's joke.

"Take care I do not marry you, old fool!" retorted the young girl, whose last words were happily deadened by the noise.

"Children," said Madame de Fontaine to soften this impertinence, "Emilie, like the rest of you, will only consult her mother."

"Oh! mon Dieu! I shall only consult myself in a matter that concerns none but myself," said Mademoiselle de Fontaine very distinctly.

All eyes were then directed to the head of the family. Everyone seemed curious to see how he would manage to preserve his dignity. The venerable Vendean not only enjoyed great esteem in

society, but, more fortunate than many fathers, he was also appreciated by his family, all the members of which had known how to recognize the solid qualities which had helped him to make the fortune of all who belonged to him; he was also associated with that profound respect shown by English families and several aristocratic houses on the continent to a representative of the genealogical tree. There was a deep silence, and the eyes of the guests traveled alternately from the spoiled child's sulky and haughty countenance, to the stern faces of Monsieur and Madame de Fontaine.

"I have left Emilie mistress of her own fate," was the answer that fell from the count in a deep voice.

The relations and guests then looked at Mademoiselle de Fontaine with curiosity, mingled with pity. These words seemed to indicate that the paternal kindness was tired of struggling with a character that the family knew to be incorrigible. The sons-in-law murmured, and the brothers smiled mockingly at their wives.

From that time, each ceased to be interested in the marriage of the proud girl. Her old uncle was the only one who, in his capacity of old sailor, dared to tack round her and encounter her sallies, without being afraid of giving her shot for shot.

When the fine weather came after the vote of the budget, this family, true pattern of parliamentary families on the other side of the Channel, who have a finger in all the administrations and ten votes in

the Commons, fled, like a lot of birds, to the beautiful sites of Aulnay, Antony and Châtenay. The wealthy receiver-general had recently purchased, in his parts, a country-house for his wife, who only remained in Paris during the sessions. Although the lovely Emilie despised plebeians, this feeling was not carried so far as to disdain the advantages of the fortune amassed by the *bourgeois;* so she accompanied her sister to her sumptuous villa, not so much out of love for the members of her family who went there, but because good breeding imperiously demands that every self-respecting woman should leave Paris during the summer. The green fields of Sceaux admirably fulfilled the conditions exacted by good breeding and the discharge of public functions.

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As it is rather doubtful whether the fame of the country ball at Sceaux has ever reached beyond the limits of the province of the Seine, it is necessary to give some particulars about this weekly festivity which, from its importance, threatened to become an institution. The surroundings of the little town of Sceaux enjoy a reputation, due to scenery which is considered lovely. Possibly it is very commonplace and only owes its celebrity to the stupidity of the Paris bourgeois, who, in leaving the abyss of bricks in which they are buried, would be disposed to admire the plains of Beauce. And yet the romantic shades of Aulnay, the hills of Antony, and the valley of Bièvre being inhabited by several artists who have traveled, by strangers, very fastidious people, and by numbers of pretty women who are not wanting in style, it is to be presumed that the Parisians have some excuse. But Sceaux has one other attraction which appeals no less forcibly to the Parisian. In the middle of a garden from whence some delicious views are obtained, is an immense rotunda, open on all sides, the dome of which—as airy as it is big—is supported by graceful pillars. This rustic dais shelters a dancing-hall. It was no uncommon thing for the most strait-laced proprietors of the neighborhood to emigrate once or twice during the season to this palace of rustic

Terpsichore, either in brilliant cavalcades, or in those elegant and light carriages that sprinkle philosophic pedestrians with dust. The hope of meeting some of the society women and of being seen by them, the hope—less seldom baffled—of seeing the young peasant women, as subtle as judges, brought together on Sundays, at the ball of Sceaux, numberless swarms of lawyers' clerks, disciples of Esculapius, and young men whose white complexion and bloom are sustained by the damp air of the Parisian back-shops.

The foundations of a good many bourgeois marriages are also laid to the strains of the orchestra that occupies the centre of this circular hall. If the roof could speak, what love affairs could it not relate? This interesting medley at that time gave more piquancy to the ball of Sceaux than the two or three other dances in the neighborhood of Paris, its rotunda, the beauty of its position and the pleasures of its garden giving it indisputable advantages over any others. Emilie was the first to express a wish to go and make one of the crowd at this merry ball of the district, promising herself great pleasure in joining this assembly. Everyone was astonished at her desire to wander into the heart of such a crowd; but do not great folks keenly enjoy the unknown? Mademoiselle de Fontaine amused herself by picturing all these cockney figures, fancied herself leaving the memory in more than one bourgeois heart of a bewitching glance and smile, already chuckled over the affectations of the dancers, and

sharpened her pencils for the scenes with which she expected to adorn the pages of her satirical album. Sunday did not arrive fast enough to suit her impatience. The party from the Planat house set out on foot, in order not to commit the indiscretion of numbering as people who wished to honor the ball with their presence. They had dined early. In fact, the month of May favored this aristocratic escapade with one of her finest nights. Mademoiselle de Fontaine was quite surprised at finding, under the rotunda, several quadrilles composed of persons who appeared to belong to good society. She certainly saw here and there some young people who seemed to have spent the savings of a month to make a show for one day, and observed several couples whose unmixed joy argued nothing conjugal; but she only had to glean instead of reaping. She was surprised to see pleasure dressed in cambric strongly resembling pleasure decked in satin, and the bourgeoisie dancing with as much grace as—sometimes more than—the nobility. Most of the dresses were simple and neatly arranged. Those who, in this assembly, represented the lords of the land, that is to say, the peasants, remained in their corner with incredible politeness. Mademoiselle de Fontaine, to a certain extent, even had to examine the different elements composing this gathering before she could find one object of derision. But she had neither the time to devote herself to her malicious criticisms, nor the leisure to hear many of those striking remarks preserved by caricaturists

with delight. The haughty creature suddenly met in this vast field, a flower—the metaphor is seasonable—whose brilliancy and color worked upon her imagination with all the fascination of a novelty. It often happens that we look at a dress, hangings, or a white paper with so much absent-mindedness that we do not immediately perceive a spot or some brilliant point which later on suddenly strikes our eye as if it had come there at the moment only that we notice it; by some kind of moral phenomena rather like this, Mademoiselle de Fontaine recognized in a young man the model of exterior perfection that she had dreamed of so long.

Seated on one of those rough chairs that formed the necessary circle round the hall, she had placed herself at the extremity of the group made by the family so that she might be able to get up or stretch forward, as she liked, in conforming herself to the living pictures and groups presented in this hall, just as at the exhibitions at the Musée, she would impertinently turn her eyeglass upon a person who might happen to be two feet away, and would make her reflections upon them as if she were criticising or praising a study of a head, or a *genre* painting. Her eyes, after having wandered over this vast animated canvas, were suddenly arrested by this figure which seemed to have been purposely placed in one corner of the tableau, in the most charming way, like some character out of all proportion to the rest. The dreamy, solitary stranger was leaning lightly against one of the columns that supported

the roof, with his arms crossed and holding himself as if he were posing to an artist for his picture. Although full of elegance and pride this attitude was free from affectation. No sign went to show that he had placed his face at three-quarters and slightly bent his head to the right, like Alexander or Lord Byron and some other great men, with the sole object of attracting attention. His fixed gaze followed the movements of one of the dancers, betraying some deep feeling. His slender, graceful figure recalled the splendid proportions of Apollo. Beautiful black hair curled naturally on his high forehead. With a single glance Mademoiselle de Fontaine noticed the nicety of his linen, his fresh kid gloves evidently from the best maker, and his small feet, well shod in boots of Irish leather. He wore none of the horrid gewgaws with which the old dandies of the National Guard or the Lovelaces of the counting-house were loaded. Only a black ribbon, to which his eyeglass was hung, fluttered over a waistcoat of irreproachable cut. The fastidious Emilie had never seen the eyes of any man shadowed by such long, curved eyelashes. Melancholy and passion breathed in this face, which was distinguished by an olive-colored, manly complexion. His mouth seemed always ready to smile and to lift the corners of two eloquent lips; but this tendency, far from being the result of gaiety, rather revealed a kind of sad charm. There was too much promise in the head, too much distinction in the appearance, for anyone to have said, "What a

handsome man, or a fine man!" One wished to know him. Looking at the stranger, the sharpest observer could not have avoided taking him for some man of talent attracted to this village festivity by some powerful interest.

This stock of observation did not cost Emilie more than a moment's attention, during which this privileged man, submitted to a severe analysis, became the object of a secret admiration.

She did not say, "He must be a peer of France!" but, "Oh! if he is noble, and he must be—"

Without concluding her thought, she suddenly rose, and went, followed by her brother the lieutenant-general, toward the column, apparently looking at the lively quadrilles; but, by an optical trick well known to women, she did not miss the young man's slightest movement, as she approached. The stranger politely moved off to make way for the two newcomers and leaned against another column. Emilie, as much piqued by the stranger's politeness as if it had been an impertinence, began to talk to her brother, raising her voice much more than good breeding required; she moved her head about, redoubled her gestures and laughed without much object, not so much to amuse her brother as to attract the attention of the imperturbable stranger. None of these little stratagems succeeded. Mademoiselle de Fontaine then followed the direction of the young man's eyes, and perceived the cause of this indifference.

In the middle of the quadrille in front of her, was

dancing a pale young girl, like those Scotch divinities placed by Girodet in his enormous composition of Ossian receiving the French Warriors.

Emilie thought she recognized in her an illustrious lady who had for some time inhabited a neighboring country-house. Her cavalier was a youth of fifteen with red hands, nankeen breeches, blue coat, and white shoes, which showed that her love of dancing exceeded her fastidiousness in the choice of partners. Her movements did not show the effects of her apparent weakness; but a slight blush already tinged her white cheeks and her color began to revive.

Mademoiselle de Fontaine approached the quadrille so as to be able to examine the stranger the moment she returned to her place, whilst the vis-a-vis repeated the figure she was doing. But the unknown stepped forward, leaned toward the pretty dancer, and the inquisitive Emilie could distinctly hear these words, although spoken in a voice that was both imperious and gentle:

"Clara, my child, don't dance any more."

Clara gave a little pout, nodded her head in token of obedience, and finished by smiling.

After the quadrille, the young man took all a lover's care in wrapping a cashmere shawl round the young girl's shoulders, and made her sit where she was sheltered from the wind. Then presently, Mademoiselle de Fontaine, who saw them rise and walk round the enclosure like people preparing to leave, found some means of following them under the pretext of admiring the sights of the garden.

Her brother lent himself with mischievous good-nature to the caprices of this rather aimless walk. Emilie then saw this handsome couple getting into an elegant tilbury held by a mounted servant in livery; just as the young man, from the height of his seat was adjusting his reins, he first gave her one of those glances that one casts vaguely at a big crowd; then she had the slender satisfaction of seeing him turn his head twice, and the strange young lady did the same. Was it jealousy?

"I presume that as you have now seen enough of the garden," said the brother, "we can go back to the dance."

"Willingly," she replied, "do you think she is a relation of Lady Dudley?"

"Lady Dudley may have a relation staying with her," answered the Baron de Fontaine, "but not a young lady."

The next day Mademoiselle de Fontaine expressed a wish to ride. By degrees she accustomed her old uncle and her brothers to accompanying her on certain early rides, very good, she said, for her health. She showed a singular partiality for the surroundings of the village in which Lady Dudley lived. In spite of her cavalry manœuvres, she did not see the stranger again so soon as the glad pursuit to which she was devoting herself had led her to hope. She went again several times to the ball of Sceaux, without succeeding in finding the young Englishman who had fallen from the skies to dominate and beautify her dreams. Although nothing

stimulates the dawning love of a young girl more than an obstacle, there were, nevertheless, moments when Mademoiselle de Fontaine was on the point of giving up her strange and secret pursuit, almost despairing of the success of her enterprise, whose singularity may give some idea of the boldness of her character. In fact, she might have gone round the village of Châtenay for a long time without seeing her stranger. The young Clara, since that was the name overheard by Mademoiselle de Fontaine, was not English, and the supposed stranger did not inhabit the flowery, perfumed groves of Châtenay. One evening, Emilie was out on horseback with her uncle, who since the fine weather had enjoyed a fairly long cessation of hostilities from the gout, when they met Lady Dudley. Beside the illustrious lady in her barouche was Monsieur de Vaudenesse. Emilie recognized the handsome couple, and her suppositions were dissipated in a moment like dreams.

Vexed like all women disappointed in an expectation, she turned back so quickly, that her uncle had the greatest trouble in the world in following her, so far had she urged on her pony.

"Apparently I have grown too old to understand people of twenty," said the sailor to himself, putting his horse at a gallop, "or perhaps youth is not what it was in the old days. But what is the matter with my niece? There she is walking as slowly as a gendarme patroling the streets of Paris. One might think she wanted to hem in that honest

bourgeois who looks to me like an author musing over his poems, for I think he has an album in his hand. Upon my word, I am an idiot! May it not be the young man for whom we are searching?"

At this thought, the old sailor slackened his horse's speed, so as to come up to his niece without any noise. The vice-admiral had committed too much mischief in the year 1771 and after, a period of our annals when gallantry was in favor, not to guess at once that Emilie had, by the greatest chance, met the unknown of the Sceaux ball. In spite of the mist spread by age over his gray eyes, the Comte de Kergarouët recognized the signs of an unusual agitation in his niece, despite the immobility she tried to impart to her face. The young girl's piercing eyes were fixed in a sort of stupor upon the stranger quietly walking before her.

"Good!" said the sailor to himself, "she will follow him as a merchant vessel follows a pirate. Then, when she sees him disappearing, she will be in despair at not knowing who it is she loves, and whether it is a marquis or a bourgeois. Really, young heads ought always to have an old fogy by them, like myself—"

He suddenly urged his horse along in such a way as to start off his niece's, and passed so rapidly between her and the young pedestrian that he forced him on to the green bank bordering the roadside. Immediately pulling up his horse the count cried:

"Could you not have stood aside?"

"Ah! I beg your pardon, sir," answered the

stranger, "I did not know it was my place to apologize to you for having very nearly upset me."

"Eh! friend, stop that," sharply replied the sailor, assuming a sneering tone of voice which was somewhat insulting.

At the same time, the count lifted his whip as if to whip his horse and touched his interlocutor's shoulder, saying:

"A liberal bourgeois is a reasoner, all reasoners ought to be sensible."

The young man climbed down the bank at this sarcasm; crossed his arms and answered very angrily:

"Sir, I can hardly believe, from your white hairs, that you still amuse yourself seeking duels."

"White hair?" cried the sailor, interrupting him, "you lie in your throat! it is only gray."

A quarrel thus begun, grew so heated in a few seconds, that the young adversary forgot the moderate tone he had forced himself to maintain. Just as the Comte de Kergarouët saw his niece coming up with all the signs of eager anxiety, he was giving his name to his antagonist bidding him keep silence before the young lady entrusted to his care. The stranger could not help smiling and gave the old sailor a card, pointing out that he lived in a country house at Chevreuse, and rapidly disappeared after having indicated it to him.

"You nearly hurt that poor fellow, child," said the count hastening to meet Emilie, "you no longer know how to hold in your horse. You leave me there to compromise my dignity in covering your

follies; whilst, had you remained, one of your looks or one of your polite words, one of those you say so prettily when you are not impertinent, would have mended all, even had you broken his arm."

"Eh! my dear uncle, it was your horse, and not mine, which caused this accident. I really think that you must not ride any more, you are not as good a cavalier as you were last year. But instead of talking nothings—"

"The deuce! nothings! Then it is nothing if you are impertinent to your uncle!"

"Ought we not to go and see if that young man is hurt? He limps, uncle, do look."

"No, he runs. Ah! I lectured him severely."

"Ah! uncle, I recognize you there."

"Stop, niece!" said the count stopping Emilie's horse by the bridle; "I do not see the necessity of making advances to some shopkeeper who is only too lucky in being thrown down by a charming young girl or by the commander of *La Belle-Poule*."

"Why do you think he is a common man, my dear uncle? It seems to me that he has very refined manners."

"Everyone has manners now-a-days, my niece."

"No, uncle, everyone has not got the air and appearance that comes from frequenting drawing-rooms, and I will willingly lay you a wager that this young man is noble."

"You had not much time to examine him."

"But it is not the first time I have seen him."

"And it is not the first time either, that you have

looked for him," replied the admiral laughing. Emilie reddened; her uncle amused himself by leaving her some time in confusion, then he said to her, "Emilie, you know that I love you as if you were my own child, just because you are the only one of the family who has that legitimate pride that good birth gives. Deuce! child, who would have thought that good principles would become so rare? Well, I want to be your confidant. My dear little one, I see that you are not indifferent to this young gentleman. Hush! they would make fun of us in the family if we embarked under a bad flag. You know what that means. So let me help you, my niece. Let us both keep the secret, and I promise to bring him to you in the drawing-room."

"And when, uncle?"

"To-morrow."

"But, dear uncle, I shall not be bound in any way?"

"Not at all, and you may bombard him, burn and leave him like an old carack if it pleases you. He will not be the first, eh?"

"How good you are, uncle!"

As soon as the count got in, he put on his spectacles, secretly drew the card from his pocket and read:

MAXIMILIEN LONGUEVILLE, RUE DU SENTIER.

"Rest in peace, my dear niece," he said to Emilie, "you may harpoon him in all ease of conscience, he belongs to one of our historic families;

and, if he is not a peer of France, he will inevitably become one."

"How do you know so many things?"

"That is my secret."

"Then you know his name?"

The count silently nodded his gray head, which was rather like an old oak trunk with a few leaves curled up by the autumn cold fluttering round it; at this sign, his niece came to try upon him the unfailing power of her coquetries. An adept in the art of cajoling the old sailor, she lavished upon him the most infantile caresses, the most tender words; she even went so far as to kiss him, in order to obtain the revelation of so important a secret. The old man, who passed his days playing at such scenes with his niece, and which often cost him the price of a set of gems or his box at the Italiens, was pleased to let her implore him and particularly to caress him. But, as he spun out his pleasure too long, Emilie became vexed, passed from caresses to sarcasms, and sulked, then returned, overcome by curiosity.

The diplomatic sailor exacted a solemn promise from his niece that for the future she would be more modest, more gentle, less wilful, less extravagant, and, above all, tell him everything. The treaty concluded and signed by a kiss which he laid on Emilie's white forehead, he led her into a corner of the drawing-room, sat her on his knee, placed his two thumbs over the card so as to hide it, letter by letter disclosed the name of Longueville, and

COMTE DE KERGAROUËT AND MAXIMILIEN

"Could you not have stood aside?"

"Ah! I beg your pardon, sir," answered the stranger, "I did not know it was my place to apologize to you for having very nearly upset me."

* * * * * * * * *

"Sir, I can hardly believe, from your white hairs, that you still amuse yourself seeking duels."

"White hair?" cried the sailor, interrupting him, "you lie in your throat! it is only gray."

A quarrel thus begun * * *

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obstinately refused to let her see more. This occurrence only intensified Mademoiselle de Fontaine's secret sentiment, and she spent the greater part of the night unfolding the brightest of the dreams upon which she had fed her hopes. At last, thanks to the chance so often prayed for, Emilie now saw something quite different from idle fancy in the source of the imaginary riches with which she gilded her conjugal life. Like all young people, ignorant of the dangers of love and marriage, she was madly fond of the delusive externals of marriage and love. Does this not mean that her sentiment arose like almost all Youth's fancies, sweet and cruel errors that exercise so fatal an influence over the lives of young girls who are inexperienced enough to trust the care of their future happiness to themselves? The next morning before Emilie was awake, her uncle had hurried to Chevreuse. Seeing in the yard of an elegant house the young man whom he had purposely insulted the previous day, he went toward him with the affectionate politeness of the elders of the old Court.

"Eh! my dear sir, who would have thought that I should quarrel at seventy-three years of age, with the son or grandson of one of my best friends? I am a vice-admiral, sir. From that you will gather that I think as little of a duel as I do of smoking a cigar. In my day, two young people could not become friends until they had seen the color of each other's blood. But, *ventre-de-biche!* yesterday in capacity of sailor I had too much rum on board and

I foundered on you. Shake hands! I would rather take a hundred rebuffs from a Longueville than cause the least pain to his family."

A certain coldness that the young man tried to show the Comte de Kergarouët could not withstand the frank kindness of his manners, and he allowed him to squeeze his hand.

"You were going to ride," said the count, "do not let me disturb you. But, if you have no plans, come with me. I invite you to dine to-day at the Planat house. My nephew, the Comte de Fontaine, is a man you ought to know. Ah! *morbleu,* I hope to compensate you for my rudeness by presenting you to five of the prettiest women in Paris. Eh! eh! young man, your brow clears. I like young men and I like to see them happy. Their pleasure reminds me of the good years of my youth when intrigues were no more lacking than duels. How gay those times were! To-day, one reasons and disquiets one's self over everything, as if there never had been any fifteenth or sixteenth century."

"But, sir, are we not right? The sixteenth century only gave religious liberty to Europe, and the nineteenth has given it freedom of pol—"

"Ah! don't let us talk politics. I am an ultra old fogy you see. But I would not prevent young men from being revolutionaries as long as they leave the king the liberty of scattering their mobs."

A few feet from there, when the count and his young companion were in the middle of the wood, the sailor saw a rather slender birch tree, stopped

his horse, took one of his pistols, and the ball lodged in the middle of the tree fifteen feet away.

"You see, my dear fellow, that I fear no duel," he said with comical gravity, looking at Monsieur Longueville.

"Neither do I," replied the latter, who promptly loaded a pistol, aimed at the hole made by the count's ball, and placed his own close to the mark.

"There's a well brought-up young man," cried the sailor with a kind of enthusiasm.

During the walk he took with the man he already looked upon as his nephew, he found a thousand opportunities of questioning him on all those trifles of which a perfect knowledge constituted, according to his particular code, an accomplished gentleman.

"Have you any debts?" he finally asked his companion after many questions.

"No, sir."

"What! you pay for all that is supplied to you?"

"Exactly, sir; otherwise we should lose all credit and every kind of respect."

"But at least you have more than one mistress? Ah! you blush, my friend? Morals are much changed. With these ideas of legal order, Kantism and liberty, youth is spoiled. You have neither Guimard nor Duthé, nor creditors, and you don't know heraldry; but, my young friend, you are not *educated!* Know that he who does not commit his follies in springtime commits them in winter. If I have eighty thousand francs income at seventy-three, it is because I ran through the capital at

thirty—oh! with my wife, of course, honorably, quite honorably. Nevertheless, your shortcomings will not prevent me from introducing you to the Planat house. Remember that you promised to come, and I shall expect you."

"What an extraordinary little old man," said young Longueville to himself; "he is vigorous and fresh; but, although he may wish to appear good-natured, I shall not trust him."

*

The next day, toward four o'clock, when the company was scattered in the drawing-rooms and billiard-rooms, a servant announced to the inmates of the Planat house: Monsieur *de* Longueville. At the name of the old Comte de Kergarouët's favorite, everyone, down to the player who was going to miss a ball, came hurrying, as much to watch Mademoiselle de Fontaine's face, as to judge the human phœnix who had deserved honorable mention to the detriment of so many rivals. A simple, refined dress, manners full of ease, polite ways, a sweet voice of a tone that vibrated the heart's chords, gained Monsieur Longueville the good will of all the family. He did not seem strange to the luxury of the pompous receiver-general's house. Although his conversation was that of a man of the world, everyone could easily guess that he had received the most brilliant education and that his acquirements were as solid as they were extensive. He so happily hit upon the right word in a rather trifling discussion raised by the old sailor upon naval constructions, that one of the ladies observed that he seemed to have come from the Ecole Polytechnique.

"I think, madame," he replied, "one may consider it a cause for pride to have gone into it."

In spite of eager entreaties, he politely, but

firmly, resisted the desire they expressed to keep him to dine, and fixed the attention of the ladies by saying that he was Hippocrate to a young sister whose delicate health demanded great care.

"Monsieur is no doubt a doctor?" ironically asked one of Emilie's sisters-in-law.

"Monsieur came from the Ecole Polytechnique," kindly answered Mademoiselle de Fontaine, whose face glowed with the richest color directly she learned that the young girl at the dance was Monsieur de Longueville's sister.

"But, my dear, one can be a doctor and yet have been at the Ecole Polytechnique; is that not so, monsieur?"

"Madame, there is nothing against it," replied the young man.

All eyes turned upon Emilie, who was looking at the fascinating stranger with a sort of anxious curiosity. She breathed more freely when he added, not without a smile:

"I have not the honor of being a doctor, madame, and I have even given up entering the profession of civil engineering in order to keep my independence."

"And you did well," said the count, "but how can you look upon being a doctor as an honor?" added the great Breton. "Ah! my young friend, for a man like you—"

"Monsieur le Comte, I infinitely respect all professions that have a useful end in view."

"Eh! then we are agreed; you respect those

professions I imagine, as a young man respects a matron."

Monsieur de Longueville's visit was neither too long nor too short. He left the moment he perceived he had pleased everybody and that everyone's curiosity about him was aroused.

"He's a cunning fellow," said the count, coming back to the drawing-room after seeing him out.

Mademoiselle de Fontaine, who alone was in the secret of this visit, had dressed herself rather elegantly so as to attract the young man's notice; but she had the petty mortification of seeing that he did not pay her as much attention as she thought she deserved. The family were rather surprised at the silence in which she had wrapt herself. For new-comers Emilie ordinarily exerted her coquetry, her witty chatter, and the inexhaustible eloquence of her glance and attitudes. Whether the sweet voice and attractive manners of the young man had charmed her, or she was seriously in love and this feeling had wrought a change in her, her demeanor had lost all affectation. Simple and natural, she must doubtless have seemed more beautiful. Several of her sisters and an old lady friend of the family, judged this behavior a refinement of coquetry. They supposed that, thinking the young man worthy of her, Emilie intended showing her gifts but by degrees, in order to dazzle him all of a sudden when she had pleased him. All the members of the family were curious to know what this capricious girl thought of the stranger; but

when, during dinner, each one delighted in endowing Monsieur Longueville with some new quality, whilst claiming to have been the only one to discover it, Mademoiselle de Fontaine remained silent for some time; a slight sarcasm from her uncle suddenly roused her from her apathy, she said in a rather epigrammatical way that this divine perfection must conceal some great fault, and that she should be very careful not to judge so clever a man at first sight.

"Those who please everybody please nobody," she added, "and the worst of all faults is to have none."

Like all young girls who are in love, Emilie flattered herself with the hope of hiding her feeling in the depths of her heart by deceiving the Argus eyes that surrounded her; but, at the end of a fortnight, there was not a single member of this numerous family but was initiated into this little domestic secret. At Monsieur Longueville's third visit, Emilie believed she had something to do with it. This discovery caused her such an intoxicating pleasure, that, in thinking it over, she was astonished. In that there was something painful to her pride. Accustomed to forming the centre of society, she was obliged to acknowledge a force that drew her out of herself; she tried to rebel, but she could not drive the young man's fascinating image from her heart. After that there soon arose anxiety. Two qualities in Monsieur Longueville very unfavorable to the general curiosity, were an unexpected

reserve and modesty. The artifices dispersed in Emilie's conversation and the traps she laid for wringing some particulars about himself from the young man, he knew how to baffle with the skill of a diplomatist who wishes to hide secrets. If she spoke of painting, Monsieur Longueville answered as a connoisseur. If she played, the young man proved without conceit that he was as good at the piano. One evening he enchanted all the company by joining his delicious voice to Emilie's in one of Cimarosa's most beautiful duets; but, when they tried to enquire if he were an artist, he put them off with so much gracefulness, that he did not leave these women, so skilled in the art of divining sentiments, the possibility of discovering to what social sphere he belonged. No matter with what boldness the old uncle threw the grappling irons on to this vessel, Longueville nimbly escaped in order to maintain the charm of mystery; and he was able all the more easily to remain the *handsome stranger* at the Planat house, in that curiosity did not overstep the bounds of politeness. Emilie, tormented by this reserve, hoped to gain more from the sister than the brother in this kind of confidence. Seconded by her uncle, who managed this manœuvre as well as he would that of a ship, she tried to bring upon the scenes the hitherto silent character of Mademoiselle Clara Longueville. The house party soon showed the greatest desire to know so amiable a person, and to procure her some amusement. An informal dance was proposed and accepted. The

ladies did not completely despair of making a young girl of sixteen talk.

In spite of these little clouds, gathered by suspicion and raised by curiosity, a great light pervaded Mademoiselle de Fontaine's soul, deliciously rejoicing in the life that brought her nearer another. She was beginning to understand social relations. Whether happiness makes us better, or whether she was too much absorbed to tease others, she became less caustic, more forbearing, more gentle. The change in her character delighted her astonished family. Perhaps, after all, her egotism was being transformed into love. To look for the arrival of her timid and secret adorer was an intense joy. Without a single word of passion having been spoken, she knew she was loved, and delighted in skilfully displaying for the young stranger the treasures of an education that showed itself to be so varied. She too saw that she was being carefully observed, and then she tried to conquer the faults that her bringing-up had encouraged. Was it not a first tribute to love, and was she not fiercely reproaching herself? She wanted to please and she fascinated; she loved and she was idolized. Her family, knowing she was well protected by her pride, gave her sufficient liberty to taste those little childish pleasures that lend so much charm and force to a first love. More than once, the young man and Mademoiselle de Fontaine walked alone in the alleys of this park where nature was decked like a woman for a dance. More than once, they

held these aimless, featureless conversations in which the most senseless sentences are those that hide the most feeling. Together they often admired the setting sun and its rich colors. They gathered marguerites to pick them to pieces, and sang the most impassioned duets using melodies from Pergolèse or Rossini, like faithful interpreters, to express their secrets.

The day of the dance arrived. Clara Longueville and her brother, whom the servants persisted in dignifying with the noble particle, were the heroes of the evening. For the first time in her life, Mademoiselle de Fontaine saw a young girl's triumph with pleasure. She lavished with sincerity on Clara those graceful caresses and little attentions that women only ordinarily exchange to excite the jealousy of men. Emilie had an object, she wanted to surprise secrets. But, in her capacity of woman, Mademoiselle Longueville at least was equal, and showed more finesse and ingenuity than her brother; she had not even the appearance of being reserved and knew how to hold conversation on subjects unconnected with material interests, whilst putting into it so much charm, that Mademoiselle de Fontaine conceived a sort of envy of her and surnamed her the *Siren*. Although Emilie had formed the intention of making Clara talk, it was Clara who questioned Emilie; she wanted to judge her, and was judged by her; she was often vexed at having let her character appear in several answers mischievously extorted from her by Clara, whose

modest, candid air repudiated all suspicion of perfidy. There was a moment when Mademoiselle de Fontaine seemed vexed at having been provoked by Clara into an imprudent tirade against commoners.

"Mademoiselle," this charming creature said to her, "I have heard Maximilien speak so much of you, that I have the most lively desire to know you out of affection for him; but to wish to know you, is it not to wish to love you?"

"My dear Clara, I was afraid of displeasing you by speaking like that against those who are not noble."

"Oh! do not be afraid. Now-a-days, these sorts of discussions are objectless. As for me, they do not affect me; I am outside the question."

However ambitious this answer might be, it caused Mademoiselle de Fontaine to feel great joy; for, like all passionate people, she construed it as oracles are read, in whatever sense it agreed with her desires, and came back to the dance more joyous than ever in looking at Longueville, whose manners and elegance perhaps surpassed those of her imaginary type. She felt all the more satisfaction in reflecting that he was noble, her black eyes shone, she danced with all the pleasure one feels in the presence of the person one loves. The two lovers had never understood each other better than at this moment; and more than once they felt the tips of their fingers thrill and tremble when the rules of the quadrille joined them.

This handsome couple reached the beginning of

autumn in the midst of festivities and country pleasures, gently yielding themselves to the current of the sweetest feeling in life, whilst strengthening it by all the thousand little incidents that can be imagined; love is always alike in some respects. Each studied the other, as much as one can when in love. "In short, never has a love affair turned so rapidly into a love marriage," said the old uncle, following the two young people with his eyes, as a naturalist examines an insect under the microscope. This word frightened Monsieur and Madame de Fontaine. The old Vendean ceased to be as altogether indifferent to his daughter's marriage as he had but lately promised to be. He went to Paris to seek information, but found none. Alarmed by this mystery, and not yet knowing what would be the result of the enquiry about the Longueville family that he had begged a Parisian administrator to undertake for him, he thought he ought to advise his daughter to behave cautiously. The paternal hint was received with feigned obedience full of irony.

"At least, my dear Emilie, if you love him, do not confess it to him."

"Father, it is true that I love him; but I shall wait for your permission before I tell him so."

"And yet, Emilie, reflect that as yet you know nothing of his family or position."

"And if I do know nothing, I am very glad. But, father, you wished to see me married, you gave me liberty to make my choice, and it is irrevocably made; what more do you want?"

"We must know, dear child, if the man you have chosen is son of a peer of France," ironically replied the venerable gentleman.

Emilie was silent for a moment. Presently she raised her head, looked at her father and said with a kind of anxiety:

"Are the Longuevilles—?"

"—Extinct in the person of the old Duc de Rostein-Limbourg, who perished on the scaffold in 1793. He was the last offspring of the last younger branch."

"But, father, there are some very good families, issue of bastards. French history swarms with princes who put bars upon their shields."

"Your ideas have considerably changed," said the old gentleman smiling.

The next day was the last that the Fontaine family were to spend at the house of the Planats. Emilie, much disturbed by her father's advice, waited with eager impatience for the hour at which young Longueville was in the habit of coming, in order to obtain an explanation from him. She went out after dinner to walk alone in the park, directing her steps toward the grove where they exchanged confidences, knowing the eager young man would seek her there and, while running, she reflected on the best way of surprising so important a secret without compromising herself; no easy thing to do! Up to the present, no direct avowal had sanctioned the feeling that united her to this stranger. She had secretly enjoyed, like Maximilien, the sweetness of

a first love; but, each as proud as the other, it seemed as if both feared to confess their love.

Maximilien Longueville, inspired by Clara with sufficiently well-founded suspicions of Emilie's character, found himself alternately carried away by the violence of a young man's passion, and restrained by a wish to know and test the woman to whom he was to entrust his happiness. His love did not prevent him from recognizing in Emilie the prejudices which spoiled this youthful nature; but he wanted to know whether she loved him before he strove against them, for he would no more risk the fate of his love than he would his life. He had, therefore, constantly adhered to a silence that his look, attitude and the least of his actions belied. On the other hand, a young girl's natural pride, further increased in Mademoiselle de Fontaine by the foolish vanity with which her birth and beauty inspired her, prevented her from anticipating a declaration that her growing passion sometimes inclined her to solicit. So the two lovers had instinctively grasped their situation without explaining their secret motives to each other. There are moments in life when vagueness pleases young people. From the very fact that both had hesitated so long before speaking, they both seemed to be cruelly sporting with their expectation. One sought to discover whether he was loved, from the effort that an avowal would cost the pride of his haughty mistress, the other every moment hoped to see an over-respectful silence broken.

Seated on a rustic bench Emilie was thinking over the events that had just happened during these three delightful months. Her father's suspicions were the last fears that could touch her, she even refuted them with two or three of those reflections that to a young and inexperienced girl seemed triumphant. Above all, she agreed with herself that she could not possibly have deceived herself. During the whole season, she had never remarked in Maximilien a single gesture or a single word that might indicate a common origin or occupation; much better, his manner in discussions betrayed him to be a man engaged in the higher interests of the country.

"Besides," she said to herself, "a member of the administration, a financier or a merchant, would never have had leisure to remain a whole season making love to me in the midst of the fields and woods, spending time as freely as a nobleman with a whole lifetime, exempt from care, before him."

She was giving herelf up to a course of meditation far more interesting to her than these preliminary thoughts, when a light rustling of the leaves told her that for the last minute Maximilien had been gazing at her, doubtless with admiration.

"Do you know that it is very wrong to surprise young girls in this way?" she said to him, smiling.

"Particularly when they are thinking of their secrets?" answered Maximilien slyly.

"Why should I not have mine? You surely have yours!"

"Then you were really thinking of your secrets?" he returned, laughing.

"No, I was considering yours. Mine, I know them."

"But," gently exclaimed the young man, seizing Mademoiselle de Fontaine's arm and drawing it within his own, "perhaps my secrets are yours and yours are mine."

After having gone several steps, they found themselves under a clump of trees wrapt in the colors of the setting sun as if in a red-brown cloud. This natural magic imparted a kind of solemnity to the moment. The young man's bold and eager action and above all the fluttering of his burning heart, rapidly pulsating against Emilie's arm, threw her into an excitement that was all the more intense in that she was stirred only by the most simple and innocent of occurrences. The reserve in which young girls in high life live, gives an incredible force to the outbursts of their feelings, and is one of the greatest dangers that can attack them when they meet with an impassioned lover. Never had Emilie's and Maximilien's eyes said so many of those things that one dare not speak. Victims of this intoxication, they readily forgot the little stipulations of pride and the cold considerations of distrust. At first they could not even express themselves but by a pressure of hands which served to interpret their happy thoughts.

"Monsieur, I have a question to ask you," said Mademoiselle de Fontaine in a trembling, anxious

voice, after a long silence and after having walked a few steps with a certain slowness; "but, I beg of you to remember that it is in some degree required of me by the rather strange position in which I find myself placed toward my family."

A pause, terrifying to Emilie, followed these sentences, which she had almost stammered out.

During the moment that this silence lasted, this proud young girl dared not encounter the piercing look of the man she loved, for she had a secret consciousness of the meanness of the following words she added:

"Are you a nobleman?"

When she had uttered these last words, she wished she were at the bottom of a lake.

"Mademoiselle," gravely replied Longueville, whose changed face acquired a sort of severe dignity, "I promise to give a straightforward answer to this demand when you shall have answered with sincerity that which I shall make of you."

He dropped the arm of the young girl, who suddenly felt herself alone in life, and said to her:

"With what purpose do you question me about my birth?"

She remained motionless, cold and dumb.

"Mademoiselle," continued Maximilien, "do not let us go any further if we do not understand each other. I love you," he said in a deep and tender tone.

"Well!" he added, with a glad look at hearing the joyous exclamation that the young girl could not restrain, "why ask me if I am noble?"

"Would he speak thus if he were not so?" cried an inner voice that Emilie felt springing from the bottom of her heart.

She gracefully lifted her head, seemed to draw new life from the young man's eyes and held out her arm to him as if to conclude a fresh alliance.

"You believed I had my heart greatly set upon titles?" she asked with mischievous archness.

"I have no title to offer my wife," he answered, half gay, half serious, "but, if I take her from a high rank and from those whom the paternal fortune has accustomed to luxury and the pleasures of wealth, I know to what my choice binds me. Love gives everything," he added gaily, "but only to lovers. As to married people, they must have a little more than the sky's canopy and the meadow's carpet."

"He is rich," she thought, "as to titles, perhaps he wishes to test me! Some one has told him that I am partial to the nobility, and that I will marry none but a peer of France. My humbugging sisters must have played me this trick.—I assure you, monsieur," she said aloud, "that I have had very exaggerated ideas of life and society; but, to-day," she continued, intentionally looking at him in such a way as to turn him crazy, "I know where lie a woman's true riches."

"I am anxious to believe that you disguise nothing," he answered with gentle gravity, "but, this winter, my dear Emilie, perhaps in less than two months, I shall be proud of what I may be able to

offer you, if you care for the gratifications of wealth. It will be the only secret that I shall keep here," he said pointing to his heart, "for, on its success depends my happiness, I dare not say our—"

"Oh! say it! say it!"

It was in the midst of the sweetest converse that they slowly returned to join the company in the drawing-room. Never had Mademoiselle de Fontaine found her lover more pleasing or more clever; his slender figure, his winning manners, seemed to her still more charming since the conversation which, in some measure, had secured her the possession of a heart that was worthy the envy of all women. They sang an Italian duet with so much expression, that the party applauded them enthusiastically. Their good-bye assumed a conventional tone under which they concealed their happiness.

In short, to the young girl this day became a chain to bind her still more closely to the stranger's destiny. The force and dignity he had just displayed in the scene in which they had mutually revealed their feelings had perhaps forced from Mademoiselle de Fontaine that respect without which true love cannot exist. When she was alone with her father in the drawing-room, the venerable Vendean approached her, took her hands affectionately, and asked her if she had obtained any light upon Monsieur Longueville's family and fortune.

"Yes, dear father," she replied, "I am happier than I could ever have wished. In fact, Monsieur Longueville is the only man that I would marry."

"That's right, Emilie," answered the count, "I know what it remains for me to do."

"Do you know of any obstacle?" she asked with real anxiety.

"My dear child, this young man is an absolute stranger; but, as long as he is not a dishonest man, from the moment you love him he is as dear to me as a son."

"A dishonest man!" replied Emilie; "I am quite easy. My uncle, who introduced him to us, can answer for him. Say, dear uncle, has he been a filibuster, pirate, corsair?"

"I knew that I was going to be dragged into it," cried the old sailor, waking up. He looked round the salon, but his niece had vanished like Saint Elmo's fire, to use her favorite expression.

"Well, uncle," resumed Monsieur de Fontaine, "how could you have hidden from us all you knew about this young man? Yet you must have remarked our anxiety. Is Monsieur de Longueville of good family?"

"I do not know him from Adam or Eve," cried the Comte de Kergarouët. "Trusting to the tact of this little elf, I brought her Saint-Preux to her by a way known to myself. I know that this boy fires a pistol admirably, hunts very well, plays billiards, chess and backgammon marvelously; he fences and rides like the late Chevalier de Saint-Georges. His knowledge is comparatively as rich as our vineyards. He calculates like Barrême, draws, dances, and sings well. Eh! deuce take it!—what is the

matter with you, you people? If that does not make a perfect gentleman, show me a *bourgeois* who knows all that, find me a man who lives as honorably as he does? Does he work? Does he compromise his dignity by going into offices, to bow down to parvenus that you call directors-general? He walks upright. He is a man. But, however, I have just found in my waistcoat pocket the card he gave me when he thought I wanted to cut his throat, poor simpleton!—Now-a-days young people are not at all sharp.—Here it is."

"Rue du Sentier, No. 5," said Monsieur de Fontaine, trying to recall, from amongst all the information he had obtained, that which might relate to the young stranger. "What the devil does this mean? Messieurs Palma, Werbrust and Company, whose chief trade is in muslins, calicoes and printed cottons, wholesale, live there. Good! I have it! Longueville, the deputy, has an interest in their house. Yes, but I only know Longueville to have a son of thirty-two, who is not at all like our man, and to whom he is giving fifty thousand francs income in order to marry him to a minister's daughter; he wants to be made a peer like anybody else. I have never heard him speak of this Maximilien. Has he a daughter? Who is this Clara? However, it is possible for more than one intriguer to be called Longueville. But is not the house of Palma, Werbrust and Company half ruined by a speculation in Mexico or the Indies? I will clear this all up."

"You talk to yourself as if you were on the stage, and you seem to count me as a mere cipher," suddenly said the old sailor. "Do you not know, that if he is a gentleman, I have more than one bag in my hatchway to supply his want of fortune?"

"As to that, if he is a son of Longueville, he needs nothing; but," said Monsieur de Fontaine, shaking his head, "his father did not even purchase an office entitling to nobility. Before the Revolution, he was a solicitor; and the *de* he has assumed since the Restoration belongs to him about as much as half his wealth."

"Bah! bah! lucky for those whose fathers have been hanged!" gaily cried the sailor.

Two or three days after this memorable day, and on one of those beautiful mornings in November that show the Parisians their boulevards cleaned by the sharp cold of an early frost, Mademoiselle de Fontaine, attired in a new fur that she wanted to bring into fashion, went out with the two sisters-in-law upon whom she had formerly vented the most epigrams. The inclination to try a very elegant carriage and dresses that were to set the style for winter fashions, tempted these three women to a Parisian drive far less than the wish to see a cape that one of their friends had noticed in a handsome linen shop at the corner of the Rue de la Paix. When the three ladies entered the shop, Madame la Baronne de Fontaine pulled Emilie by the sleeve and pointed out Maximilien Longueville, seated at the cashier's desk engaged, with mercantile grace,

in giving change for a gold piece to the needlewoman with whom he seemed to be debating.

The "handsome stranger" held several patterns in his hand which left no doubt as to his respectable profession. Without anyone's observation, Emilie was seized with an icy shiver. Nevertheless, thanks to the breeding of good society, she completely concealed her inward rage, and answered her sister, "I knew it!" with a depth of intonation and such an inimitable accent as the most famous actress of the day would have envied. She advanced toward the desk.

Longueville raised his head, put the patterns in his pocket with distracting sang-froid, bowed to Mademoiselle de Fontaine and approached her with a penetrating look.

"Mademoiselle," he said to the shopwoman, who followed him with a very anxious air, "I will send and settle this account; my establishment expects it. But, here," he added in a whisper to the young woman, giving her a thousand-franc bill, "take it; it shall be a matter between us.—I hope you will forgive me, mademoiselle," he said turning to Emilie, "you will be kind enough to excuse the tyranny exercised by business."

"But it seems to me, monsieur, that it is of extreme indifference to me," replied Mademoiselle de Fontaine; looking at him with an assurance and an air of scornful carelessness that might have led anyone to believe that she was seeing him for the first time.

"Are you speaking seriously?" asked Maximilien in a broken voice.

Emilie turned her back upon him with exquisite impertinence. These few words, spoken in a low voice, had escaped the curiosity of the two sisters-in-law. When, after taking the cape, the three ladies had regained their carriage, Emilie, who found herself sitting in front, could not help taking in with her last look the depth of this odious shop, where she saw Maximilien standing with his arms crossed, in the attitude of a man who had risen above the misfortune which had attacked him so suddenly. Their eyes met and darted two implacable glances. Each hoped that the other loving heart had been cruelly wounded. In one moment, they found themselves as far from one another as if one had been in China and the other in Greenland. Is not vanity a blast that withers everything? A prey to the most violent struggle that can agitate a young girl's heart, Mademoiselle de Fontaine reaped the fullest harvest of sorrow that ever prejudice and narrowness have sown in a human soul. Her face, but lately so fresh and velvety, was streaked with yellow tints, red stains, and every now and then her white cheeks would turn suddenly green. In the hope of hiding her trouble from her sisters, she would laughingly point to a passer-by or a ridiculous toilette; but the laugh was convulsive. She felt herself more keenly wounded by the compassionate silence of her sisters than by any epigrams with which they might have

avenged themselves. She exerted all her skill to draw them into a conversation in which she tried to give vent to her anger by senseless paradoxes and overwhelming tradesmen with the most cutting insults and vulgar epigrams. Upon her return home she was seized with a fever that was at first of a somewhat dangerous nature. At the end of a month her parents and the doctor's care restored her to the prayers of her family. Everyone hoped that this lesson would be sufficiently severe to subdue Emilie, who gradually resumed her old habits and rushed anew into society.

She said there was no shame in being deceived.

"If, like her father, she had any influence in the Chamber," she said, "she would promote a law ordaining that tradesmen, especially calico-merchants, should be marked on the forehead like the sheep of Berri, down to the third generation."

She would have given to nobles alone the right to wear those old French coats that were so becoming to Louis XV.'s courtiers. To hear her, there might have been some misfortune to the monarchy in the lack of any visible difference between a merchant and a peer of France. Thousands of other jests, readily understood, rapidly followed each other when any unforeseen accident set her off on the subject. But those who loved Emilie noticed a tinge of melancholy through these sneers. Evidently, Maximilien Longueville always reigned in the bottom of this unaccountable heart. Now and then she would become as gentle as she was during the brief

season that saw the birth of her love, and sometimes she would be more unbearable than ever. Everyone excused the caprices of a temper that sprang from a sorrow that was both secret and known. The Comte de Kergarouët obtained some little influence over her, thanks to an excess of extravagance, a species of consolation that rarely misses its effect upon young Parisian women. The first time Mademoiselle de Fontaine went to a ball, was at the house of the Neapolitan Ambassador. The moment she took her place in the most brilliant of the quadrilles, she saw Longueville a few steps from her, giving a slight nod of the head to her partner.

"Is that young man one of your friends?" she asked her cavalier with a scornful air.

"He is only my brother," he replied.

Emilie could not suppress a start.

"Ah!" he resumed enthusiastically, "there is the best soul in the world—"

"Do you know my name?" asked Emilie eagerly interrupting him.

"No, mademoiselle. It is a crime, I confess, not to have retained a name that is on all lips, I ought to say, in all hearts; but I have good excuse; I have just come from Germany. My ambassador, who is in Paris on his holiday, sent me here to-night as chaperon to his amiable wife, whom you see in the corner over there."

"A truly tragic face," said Emilie, after having scrutinized the ambassadress.

"And yet she always looks like that at a ball," replied the young man laughing. "I must make her dance! But I wanted some compensation."

Mademoiselle de Fontaine bowed.

"I was much astonished," continued the talkative secretary of the Embassy, "at finding my brother here. Upon arriving at Vienna, I heard the poor boy was ill in bed. I had counted upon seeing him before coming to the ball; but politics do not always allow us leisure for family affection. The *padrona della casa* did not permit me to visit my dear Maximilien."

"Your brother is not, like you, in diplomacy?" said Emilie.

"No," sighed the secretary, "the poor boy sacrificed himself for me! He and my sister Clara gave up my father's fortune, in order that he might reunite the entail in my person. My father dreams of the peerage like all those who vote for the ministry. He has a promise of being mentioned," he added in a low voice. "After having amassed some capital, my brother then joined a banking establishment; and I know he has just made a speculation in Brazil that may make him a millionaire. You see me greatly delighted at having contributed to his success by my diplomatic relations. I am even now impatiently awaiting a dispatch from the Brazilian Legation which I hope will cheer him up. How do you think he looks?"

"But your brother's face does not strike me as being that of a man who thinks of money."

With a single glance the young diplomat scrutinized the outwardly calm face of his partner.

"What!" he said smiling, "do young ladies then also divine the thoughts of love through taciturn brows?"

"Your brother is in love?" she asked, allowing a gesture of curiosity to escape her.

"Yes. My sister Clara, to whom he shows all a mother's care, wrote to me that he became enamored, this summer, of a most beautiful lady; but since then I have had no news of his love affairs. Would you believe that the poor boy used to get up at five in the morning to go and dispatch his business so as to be able to be at the country house of the fair one by four o'clock? So he ruined a charming racer that I had sent him. Forgive me for chattering, mademoiselle; I am only just home from Germany. For a year I have not heard French spoken correctly, I have been deprived of French faces and satiated with Germans, so much so, that in my mad patriotism, I believe I should speak to the ghost of a Parisian lamp-post. Then, if I chatter with more unconstraint than quite becomes a diplomat, the fault lies with you, mademoiselle. Were you not the one to point out my brother? When he is mentioned I am inexhaustible. I would like to be able to tell the whole world how good and generous he is. It was a question of nothing less than one hundred thousand francs income brought in by the Longueville estate!"

However Mademoiselle de Fontaine obtained these

important disclosures, it was partly owing to the skill with which she questioned her confiding cavalier, from the moment she learned that he was the brother of her despised lover.

"Did it not distress you to see your brother selling muslin and calico?" asked Emilie after they had gone through the third figure of the quadrille.

"How did you know that?" asked the diplomat. "Thank heaven! although streams of words escape me, yet I have learned the art of saying only what I intend, like all other diplomatic novices that I know."

"You told me, I assure you."

Monsieur de Longueville looked at Mademoiselle de Fontaine with an astonishment full of sagacity. A suspicion entered his mind. He alternately examined his brother's eyes and those of his partner, guessed all, clasped his hands together, raised his eyes to the ceiling, began to laugh, and said:

"I am an idiot! You are the most beautiful woman at the ball, my brother looks at you stealthily, he dances in spite of the fever, and you pretend not to see him. Make him happy," he said as he led her back to her old uncle, "I shall not be jealous; but I shall always tremble a little when I call you sister—"

And yet the two lovers were to be as inexorable one as the other. Towards two in the morning, a collation was served in an immense gallery, where, in order to leave persons of the same circle free to assemble, the tables had been arranged as they are

at a restaurant. By one of those accidents that always happen to lovers, Mademoiselle de Fontaine found herself at a table next to the one at which the most distinguished people were seated. Maximilien was one of this group. Emilie, listening attentively to her neighbors' talking, was able to overhear one of those conversations that are readily taken up between young women and young men who have the charm and appearance of Maximilien Longueville. Speaking to the young banker was a Neapolitan duchess, whose eyes flashed, and whose snowy skin had the lustre of satin. The intimacy that young Longueville pretended to share with her, wounded Mademoiselle de Fontaine all the more as she bore her lover twenty times more tenderness than she had formerly yielded him.

"Yes, monsieur, in my country, true love knows how to make all kinds of sacrifice," said the duchess, simpering.

"Then you are more impassioned than French women are," said Maximilien, whose burning glance fell upon Emilie; "they are all vanity."

"Monsieur," answered the young girl quickly, "is it not a shame to slander one's country? Devotion exists in all nations."

"Do you believe, mademoiselle," replied the Italian with a sardonic smile, "that a Parisian is capable of following her lover wherever he goes?"

"Ah! let us understand each other, madame. One goes into the desert to live in a tent, but one does not go to sit in a shop."

She ended her sentiment with a scornful gesture. Thus twice the fatal influence of her education ruined her dawning happiness, and caused her to miss her vocation. Maximilien's apparent coldness and a woman's smile wrung from her one of those sarcasms whose treacherous gratifications always tempted her.

"Mademoiselle," said Longueville in a low voice, under cover of the noise made by the ladies in rising from table, "no one will wish for your welfare more ardently than I shall; allow me to assure you of this in bidding you good-bye. In two or three days I start for Italy."

"With a duchess, no doubt?"

"No, mademoiselle, but with a mortal malady perhaps."

"Is not that a fancy?" asked Emilie looking at him anxiously.

"No," he said, "some wounds never heal."

"You will not go!" said the imperious girl smiling.

"I shall go," gravely replied Maximilien.

"You will find me married on your return, I warn you," she said coquettishly.

"I hope so."

"Impertinent!" she cried, "he avenges himself cruelly enough!"

A fortnight after, Maximilien Longueville left with his sister Clara for the warm, poetical regions of beautiful Italy, leaving Mademoiselle de Fontaine a victim to the fiercest regrets. The young

secretary of the embassy took up his brother's cudgels, and brilliantly avenged Emilie's scorn by publishing the reason of the rupture between the two lovers. He repaid his partner with interest for the sarcasms she had formerly flung at Maximilien, and often drew a smile from more than one Excellency with his description of the beautiful enemy of the shop, the amazon who preached a crusade against bankers, the young girl whose love had evaporated before half a piece of muslin.

The Comte de Fontaine was obliged to exert his influence to procure a mission in Russia for Auguste Longueville, so as to free his daughter from the ridicule which this young and dangerous persecutor liberally poured upon her. Before long, the ministry, being forced to raise an enlistment of peers to strengthen aristocratic votes that were wavering in the higher Chamber before the voice of a famous writer, nominated Monsieur *Guiraudin* de Longueville peer of France and viscount. Monsieur de Fontaine also obtained a peerage, a reward which was due as much to his fidelity in bad times as to his name, which was disrespectful to the hereditary Chamber.

About this time, Emilie, now of age, doubtless made some serious reflections upon life, for her tone and manner perceptibly changed; instead of employing herself making rude remarks to her uncle, she would bring him his crutch with a persevering tenderness that made all the wags laugh; she offered him her arm, rode in his carriage, and

accompanied him in all his walks; she even persuaded him that she loved the smell of a pipe, and would read him his beloved *quotidienne* in the midst of puffs of tobacco which the old sailor would purposely send at her; she learned piquet in order to play with the old count; finally, this whimsical young woman would listen patiently to periodic accounts of the engagement of *La Belle-Poule*, the manœuvers of *La Ville-de-Paris*, Monsieur de Suffren's first expedition, or the Battle of Aboukir. Although the old sailor had often declared he knew his longitude and latitude too well ever to be captured by a young corvette, one fine morning all fashionable circles in Paris heard of the marriage of Mademoiselle de Fontaine and the Comte de Kergarouët. The young countess gave splendid entertainments to divert her mind; but she doubtless found nothing at the bottom of this vortex; splendor but imperfectly hid the void and misery of her suffering soul; most of the time, in spite of outbursts of artificial gaiety, her beautiful face told of a secret melancholy. Nevertheless, Emilie lavished attentions on her old husband, who would often say, going to his room at night to the joyous strains of an orchestra:

"I don't know myself any longer. Had I to wait until I was seventy-three to embark as pilot on LA BELLE-EMILIE, after twenty years at the matrimonial galleys!"

The countess's conduct was marked by such severity, that the sharpest critic could have found nothing to find fault with. Observers thought that

the vice-admiral had reserved his right to dispose of his fortune so as to strengthen his hold upon his wife; a supposition which was most unjust both to uncle and niece. The attitude of husband and wife was so cleverly managed that young men, interested in discovering the secret of the household, were unable to find out whether the old count treated his wife as husband or father. He was often heard to say that he had picked up his niece as a shipwrecked person, and that, in the old days, he had never taken advantage of hospitality when he happened to save an enemy from the fury of a storm. Although the countess aimed at reigning in Paris and tried to be on a par with the Duchesses de Maufrigneuse, de Chaulieu, the Marquises d'Espard and d'Aiglemont, the Comtesses Féraud, de Montcornet, de Restaud, Madame de Camps and Mademoiselle des Touches, she would not yield to the love of the young Vicomte de Portenduère, who idolized her.

Two years after her marriage, in one of those old-fashioned circles of the Faubourg Saint-Germain where they admired his character as being worthy of olden times, Emilie heard Monsieur le Vicomte de Longueville announced; and, in the corner of the salon where she was playing piquet with the bishop of Persépolis no one could see her agitation; in turning her head, she had seen her old lover entering in all the glory of youth. Through the death of his father and his brother, who was killed by the rigorous climate of St. Petersburg, Maximilien came into

possession of the hereditary feathers in the peerage cap; his fortune equaled his acquirements and his merit; even the day before, his youthful, burning eloquence had electrified the assembly. At this moment he appeared, to the sorrowful countess, free and adorned with all the advantages she had formerly desired in her ideal standard. All the mothers with marriageable daughters made coquettish advances to a young man endowed with all the virtues they attributed to him while admiring his grace; but Emilie knew, better than anyone else, that the Vicomte de Longueville possessed a firmness of character in which a prudent woman foresees a pledge of happiness. She looked over at the admiral, who, to use his familiar expression, seemed likely to stand by his ship for a long time to come, and cursed the errors of her childhood.

At this moment, Monsieur de Persépolis said to her with episcopal grace:

"Fair lady, you have discarded the king of hearts, I have won. But do not regret the loss of your money, I will keep it for my beloved seminaries."

Paris, December, 1829.

THE PURSE

TO SOFKA

Have you never noticed, mademoiselle, that, in placing two adoring figures beside a beautiful saint, no painter or sculptor of the Middle Ages has ever failed to give them a filial resemblance? When you see your name amongst those that are dear to me and under whose patronage I place my works, remember this touching harmony, and you will find in this less of homage than the expression of brotherly affection vowed to you by

Your servant

DE BALZAC.

THE PURSE

*

For souls that are easily gladdened there is a delicious hour that comes ere night is come, and the day is no more; the twilight glimmer then spreads its soft tints or strange reflections over every object and encourages a reverie that vaguely blends with the play of light and shade. The silence that nearly always reigns at this time makes it especially dear to artists who concentrate their thoughts, standing a few feet from the work which they can no longer continue, judging it, whilst intoxicating themselves over a subject whose inmost meaning then bursts upon the inner eyes of genius. He who has never stood thoughtfully beside a friend during this period of poetic dreaming will hardly understand the indescribable privileges. The rude artifices employed by art to give the semblance of reality, completely disappear under the influence of the light and shade. If it is a question of a picture, the people that it represents seem both to speak and walk; shadow grows into shadow, the day is day, flesh is living, the eyes move, the blood flows in the veins, and fabrics glisten. Imagination lends life to every detail and sees nothing but the beauties of the work. At this hour, illusion reigns supreme; perhaps it wakens with the night! Is not illusion

a kind of night to the soul, which we furnish with dreams? It is then that illusion spreads her wings, she carries the mind away into the world of fancies, a world rich in voluptuous caprices in which the artist forgets the real world, yesterday, to-morrow, and the future, everything, even his miseries, the good as well as the bad. In this magic hour, a young and talented painter, who saw in art nothing but art itself, was perched upon the trestle that he used for painting a big, high picture which was almost finished. There, criticizing himself, admiring himself in all good faith, floating on the current of his thoughts, he lost himself in one of those meditations that delight and enlarge the soul, that caress and soothe it. His reverie doubtless lasted a long time. Night fell. Whether he wished to descend from his trestle or whether he made a careless movement believing himself near the floor,—he had no distinct recollection of the cause of his accident,—he fell, his head struck a piece of furniture, he lost consciousness and remained motionless during a lapse of time of which he knew nothing. A soft voice roused him from the species of torpor in which he was sunk. When he opened his eyes, the sight of a bright light caused him to promptly close them again; but, through the mist enwrapping his senses, he heard the whispering of two women, and felt his head resting between two young and nervous hands. He soon regained consciousness, and could see, in the light of one of those old lamps with a double air current, the most delicious head of a young girl

that he had ever seen, one of those heads that are often looked upon as a caprice of the brush, but which to him was a sudden realization of those theories of an ideal beauty that every artist creates for himself, and which inspires his talent. The face of the stranger belonged, so to speak, to the fine and delicate type of Prudhon's school, and also possessed the poetry imparted by Girodet to his fanciful figures. The freshness of the temples, the regularity of the eyebrows, the purity of line, the virginity so deeply imprinted in all the outlines of this physiognomy, made a perfect creation of the young girl. The figure was supple and slender; the make frail. Her dress, though simple and neat, indicated neither prosperity nor poverty. In coming to himself, the painter expressed his admiration by a look of astonishment, and stammered some confused thanks. He found his forehead pressed by a handkerchief, and, in spite of the odor peculiar to studios, recognized the strong smell of ether, doubtless used to recover him from his swoon. Then finally he saw an old woman, who looked like a marquise of the old régime, holding the lamp and giving instructions to the young stranger.

"Monsieur," the young girl replied to one of the questions asked by the painter when he was still in the state of uncertainty produced in his ideas by the fall, "my mother and I, we heard the noise of your body on the floor, and thought we heard a groan. The silence that followed the fall frightened us, and we hastened up. Finding the key in the

door, we fortunately took the liberty of coming in, and we saw you stretched on the ground, motionless. My mother went to fetch all that was necessary to make a compress and revive you. You are hurt on the forehead, there, do you feel it?"

"Yes, now," he said.

"O! it will not be much," said the old mother. "Happily, your head struck this lay figure."

"I feel infinitely better," answered the painter, "I only need a carriage to take me home. The porter will go and fetch one."

He wished to reiterate his thanks to the two strangers; but, at every word, the old lady interrupted him saying:

"To-morrow, monsieur, be very careful to apply leeches, or have yourself bled, drink several cups of vulnerary; take care of yourself, falls are dangerous."

The young girl stealthily looked at the artist and the pictures in the studio. Her countenance and look were perfectly modest; her curiosity suggested absent-mindedness, and her eyes seemed to express the interest that women, with a spontaneity full of grace, show in all our misfortunes. The two strangers seemed to forget the painter's works in the presence of the artist's suffering. When he had reassured them as to his condition, they went out, examining him with a solicitude that was equally devoid of significance and familiarity, without asking indiscreet questions, or seeking to inspire him with a wish to know them. Their actions were marked

by exquisite simplicity and good taste. Their refined and simple manners at first made little impression upon the artist; but, later, when he thought over all the circumstances of this event, he was vividly struck by them. When they reached the story immediately under the painter's studio, the old woman gently cried:

"Adelaide, you left the door open."

"It was to help me," answered the artist with a grateful smile.

"Mother, you came down just now," replied the young girl blushing.

"Would you like us to accompany you downstairs?" said the mother to the artist, "the staircase is dark."

"No, thank you, madame, I am much better."

"Take good hold of the banister."

The two women remained upon the landing to show a light to the young man whilst listening to the sound of his footsteps.

In order to convey all that this scene might hold that was piquant and unforeseen for the artist, it is necessary to add, that only a few days before he had established his studio at the top of this house, lying in the most obscure, and therefore the muddiest, part of the Rue de Suresnes, almost in front of the church of the Madeleine, two steps from his apartment, which was in the Rue des Champs-Elysées. The fame he had acquired by his talent had made him one of the most valued artists of France, he was beginning to feel no further want, and was

enjoying, as he said, the last of his poverty. Instead of going to work in one of those studios situated near the slums, whose moderate rent would have been formerly in proportion with his modest gains, he had gratified a wish which revived every day, in saving himself a long journey and a loss of the time which was now more precious to him than ever. Nobody in the world could have inspired more interest than Hippolyte Schinner, had he consented to make himself known; but he did not lightly confide the secrets of his life. He was the idol of a poor mother, who had educated him at the cost of the most severe privations. Mademoiselle Schinner, daughter of an Alsatian farmer, had never been married. Her tender soul had formerly been cruelly crushed by a rich man who did not pride himself upon any great scrupulousness in his love affairs. The day upon which, young and in all the splendor of beauty, in all the glory of her life, she suffered—at the expense of her heart and her beautiful illusions—that disenchantment which overtakes so slowly and so rapidly,—for we wish to believe in misfortune as late as possible and it always seems to come too quickly,—that day was a whole age of reflections, and it was also a day of religious thoughts and resignation. She refused assistance from the man who had deceived her, forsook the world, and gloried in her fault. She gave herself up entirely to her maternal love, only asking all its delights in return for the social pleasures to which she had bidden farewell. She lived by her

needle-work, hoarding a treasure in her son. And so, later, one day, one hour, repaid her the long, slow sacrifices of her poverty. At the last exhibition her son had received the Cross of the Legion of Honor. The papers, unanimously in favor of an unknown talent, still resounded with sincere praise. Artists themselves recognized a master in Schinner, and dealers covered his pictures with gold. At twenty-five, Hippolyte Schinner, to whom his mother had transmitted her womanly feeling, had, better than ever, understood his position in the world. Wishing to give his mother the pleasures of which society had so long deprived her, he lived for her, hoping, by dint of fame and wealth, to see her one day happy, rich, respected, and surrounded by celebrated men. Schinner had, accordingly, chosen his friends from amongst the most honorable, and most distinguished men. Fastidious in choosing his acquaintance, he wanted to further build up his position, already raised so high by his talent. By forcing him to live in solitude, work,—that mother of great thoughts,—to which he had devoted himself from childhood, had left him the beautiful faith which adorns the early years of life. His youthful mind forgot none of the many refinements which make an exceptional being of a young man whose heart abounds in happiness, poetry, and pure hope, weak in the eyes of blasé people, but great because they are natural. He had been gifted with the gentle, refined manners which are so becoming to a person and fascinate even those who do not

understand them. He was well made. His voice, coming from the heart, moved others to noble feelings, and indicated a genuine modesty, by a certain ingenuousness of expression. Seeing him, one felt one's self drawn toward him by one of those moral attractions which scientists happily do not yet know how to analyze; they would discover in it some phenomena of galvanism or a play of some fluid, and would formulate our feelings by the proportions of oxygen and electricity. These details may explain to bold people and well-assured men why, during the absence of the porter whom he had sent to the end of the Rue de la Madeleine to fetch a carriage, Hippolyte Schinner did not ask the porter's wife any questions about the two persons whose goodness of heart had been shown him. But although he answered yes and no to the inquiries, natural enough after such an occurrence, made by this woman about his accident, and the obliging interference of the lodgers occupying the fourth floor, he was unable to prevent her obedience to the instinct of all porters; she spoke of the two strangers according to the interests of her policy and following the secret opinions of the lodge.

"Ah!" she said, "no doubt it was Mademoiselle Leseigneur and her mother, who have lived here four years. We do not yet know what these ladies do; in the mornings, only until midday, an old charwoman, half-deaf, and who is as dumb as a stone wall, comes to work for them; in the evenings, two or three old gentlemen, decorated like you,

monsieur, one of whom has a carriage, servants and who is said to have sixty thousand francs a year, come to see them and often stay very late. Otherwise they are very quiet lodgers, like you, monsieur; and then it is economical, living on nothing; as soon as a bill comes in, they pay it. It's funny, monsieur, the mother has a different name from her daughter. Ah! when they go to the Tuileries, mademoiselle is very gorgeous, and never goes out but that she is followed by young men at whom she slams the door, and quite rightly. The landlord will be no sufferer—"

The carriage had arrived, Hippolyte listened to no more, and went home. His mother, to whom he related his adventure, dressed his wound again, and would not allow him to venture the next day to his studio. Advice was obtained, various prescriptions ordered, and Hippolyte remained at home three days. During this confinement, his idle imagination recalled to him vividly, and in scraps as it were, the details of the scene which followed his swoon. The young girl's profile stood out forcibly against the darkness of his inward vision; he could see again the mother's withered face or feel Adelaide's hands; he would again meet with some gesture which had struck him but little at first, but whose exquisite grace was brought into relief by memory; then an attitude or the sound of a melodious voice beautified by the distance of memory, would suddenly reappear, like objects, which, thrown to the bottom of the water, return to the

surface. And so, the day on which he was able to resume work, he returned early to his studio; but the visit which he unquestionably had the right to pay his neighbors was the true cause of his haste; he was already forgetting the pictures he had commenced. The moment passion breaks its bonds, it finds singular pleasures understood by those who love. Thus some persons would know why the artist slowly ascended the stairs of the fourth story, and would know the secret of the throbs succeeding each other so rapidly in his heart the moment he saw the brown door of the modest apartment inhabited by Mademoiselle Leseigneur. This girl, who did not bear the same name as her mother, had awakened a thousand sympathies in the young painter; he was pleased to think that there might be some similarity in their positions, and endowed her with all the misfortunes of his own origin. Whilst working, Hippolyte yielded himself very complacently to thoughts of love, and made a great deal of noise to force the two ladies to think of him as much as he concerned himself with them. He stayed very late at his studio, and dined there; then, towards seven o'clock, went downstairs to his neighbors.

No painter of manners and customs has dared to initiate us, perhaps through modesty, into the really curious interiors of certain Parisian existences, into the secret of those dwellings from which issue such fresh and elegant toilettes, women so brilliant that though outwardly rich, they still betray the signs of

a doubtful prosperity in their surroundings at home. If the picture is here too boldly drawn, if you find it tedious, do not blame the description which is connected, so to speak, with history; for the appearance of the apartment occupied by his two neighbors greatly influenced Hippolyte Schinner's feelings and hopes.

The house belonged to one of those proprietors in whom there pre-exists a profound horror of all repairs and improvements, one of those men who consider their position as Parisian landlords in the light of a profession. In the great chain of moral species these men are something between a miser and a usurer. Optimists from calculation, they are all faithful to the *statu quo* of Austria. If you talk of displacing a cupboard or a door, of making the most necessary ventilators, their eyes flash, their anger is excited, they shy like frightened horses. When the wind blows two or three tiles off their chimneys, they are ill, and deprive themselves of the pleasures of going to the Gymnase or the Porte-Saint-Martin, on account of the repairs. Hippolyte, who had had gratis the representation of a comic scene with the Sieur Molineux in connection with certain improvements to be made in his studio, was not surprised at the black and greasy colors, the oily tints, the stains and other sufficiently disagreeable accessories which decorated the woodwork. Besides, these brands of poverty are not entirely devoid of poetry in the eyes of an artist.

Mademoiselle Leseigneur came herself to open the

door. Recognizing the young painter, she bowed; then, at the same time, with that Parisian dexterity and presence of mind inspired by pride, she turned to shut the door of a glazed partition through which Hippolyte might have been able to see some linen stretched on the line above the economical stove, an old cot-bed, the cinders, the coal, the flat-irons, the filter, the crockery and all the utensils peculiar to small households. Fairly clean muslin curtains carefully hid this *capharnaüm*, a word familiarly used to denote this species of laboratory, here badly lighted by the borrowed light from a neighboring yard. With the rapid glance of an artist, Hippolyte took in the appointment, furniture, the ensemble and condition of this first divided room. The respectable part, which was used both as antechamber and dining-room, was hung with an old gold-colored paper, with a velvet border, no doubt manufactured by Réveillon, and the holes or stains of which had been carefully concealed under wafers. Engravings representing the Battles of Alexander by Lebrun, but with worn gilt frames, symmetrically adorned the walls. In the middle of this room was a massive mahogany table, old-fashioned in shape and with well-worn boards. A little stove, whose straight pipe without elbows could hardly be seen, was in front of the fireplace, the hearth of which contained a cupboard. In strange contrast, the chairs showed some remains of a bygone splendor, they were of carved mahogany; but the red morocco seats, the gilded nails and wire threads showed as

many scars as those of the old sergeants of the Imperial Guard. This room was used as a museum for certain things which are only found in this kind of amphibious households, nondescript objects partaking alike of luxury and poverty. Amongst other curiosities, Hippolyte noticed a richly ornamented telescope, hung over the little greenish glass which decorated the chimney-piece. To match this strange suite, there stood between the fireplace and the partition a wretched sideboard painted like mahogany, of all woods the least successful in imitation. But the red and slippery floor-tiles, the wretched little rugs placed in front of the chairs, the furniture, all shone with that polished cleanliness which lends a false lustre to old things by still further accentuating their defects, their age and long service. An indefinable odor pervaded the room, resulting from the exhalations of the capharnaüm mixed with the fumes of the dining-room and staircase, although the window was half open and the air from the street was stirring the muslin curtains, carefully drawn in such a way as to hide the recess where the previous lodgers had left the signs of their presence in various incrustations, species of domestic frescoes. Adelaide promptly opened the door of the other room, showing in the artist with a certain pleasure. Hippolyte, who had formerly seen at his mother's the same signs of want, noted them with the peculiarly vivid impression which characterizes memory's first acquisitions, and entered into all the details of this existence better than any one

else could have done. In recognizing the things of his childish life, this good young man felt neither contempt for this hidden misfortune, nor pride in the luxury he had just gained for his mother.

"Well, monsieur, I hope you feel no further effects of your fall?" said the old mother, rising from an old-fashioned easy chair standing beside the fireplace, and motioning him to a chair.

"No, madame. I have come to thank you for the kind care you gave me, and especially mademoiselle who heard me fall."

Whilst saying these words, marked by the delightful stupidity that the first agitations of true love communicate to the mind, Hippolyte was looking at the young girl. Adelaide was lighting the double-draughted lamp, no doubt to eclipse a candle held in a big flat candlestick of copper, and decorated with several projecting channels from excessive melting. She bowed slightly, went to put the candlestick in the antechamber, returned to place the lamp on the chimney-piece and seated herself close to her mother, a little behind the painter, so as to be able to look at him comfortably while appearing to be absorbed in the progress of the lamp, the light of which, chilled by the dampness of a dim chimney, was flickering in a struggle with a black and badly trimmed wick. Seeing the big glass which ornamented the mantelpiece, Hippolyte promptly fixed his gaze upon it so as to admire Adelaide. So the young girl's little trick only served to embarrass them both. Whilst chatting

with Madame Leseigneur, for Hippolyte gave her this name at all events, he examined the drawing-room, but decently and stealthily. The Egyptian faces of the iron fire-dogs could hardly be seen on a hearth full of ashes, where two fire-brands were trying to meet in front of a sham terra cotta log, as carefully hidden as a miser's treasure might be. An old Aubusson carpet, well mended, thoroughly faded, and as worn as an old pensioner's coat, failed to cover the whole floor, the cold of which was perceptible to the feet. The walls were adorned with a reddish paper, representing a figured silk stuff with a yellow pattern. In the middle of the wall opposite the windows, the artist saw the cracks and slits caused in the paper by the doors of an alcove where no doubt Madame Leseigneur slept, and very badly concealed behind a sofa. Opposite the chimney-piece, over a mahogany cupboard containing ornaments lacking neither richness nor taste, was the portrait of a military man of high rank, whom the painter could hardly distinguish for want of light; but, from the little he could see of it, he thought that this terrible daub must have been painted in China. In the windows, the red silk curtains were as faded as the suite of this general sitting-room upholstered in yellow and red tapestry. On the marble top of the cupboard, a valuable malachite dish held a dozen coffee cups, beautifully painted, and doubtless made in Sèvres. On the chimney-piece towered the eternal clock of the Empire, a warrior guiding the four horses of a chariot

whose wheels bear on every spoke the number of an hour. The candles in the candlesticks were yellowed by the smoke, and, at each corner of the mantelpiece, was a porcelain vase wreathed in artificial flowers full of dust and garnished with moss. In the centre of the room, Hippolyte noticed a card table set up and new cards. To a looker-on, there was indescribable desolation in the sight of this poverty, rouged like an old woman who wants to belie her face. At this sight, all common sense men would secretly and at once have determined upon this kind of dilemma; either these two women are honesty itself, or they live by intrigue and cards. But, looking at Adelaide, any young man as pure as Schinner must have believed in the most perfect innocence, and have ascribed the most honorable motives to the inconsistencies of this furniture.

"Child," said the old lady to the younger, "I feel cold, make a little fire, and give me my shawl."

Adelaide went into a room adjoining the drawing-room where no doubt she slept, and returned bringing her mother a cashmere shawl, which when new must have been worth a great deal, the design being Indian; but, old, without freshness and full of darns, it harmonized with the furniture. Madame Leseigneur wrapt herself up in it very artistically and with the dexterity of an old woman who wants to give belief in the truth of her words. The young girl quickly ran to the capharnaüm, and reappeared with a handful of small wood which she unhesitatingly threw into the fire to relight it.

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It would be rather difficult to describe the conversation which took place between these three persons. Guided by the tact which misfortune experienced from childhood nearly always teaches, Hippolyte did not venture the slightest remark concerning the position of his neighbors, seeing around him the symptoms of such badly concealed want. The most innocent question would have been indiscreet, and could only be asked in a long-standing friendship. Nevertheless, the painter was deeply troubled by this hidden misery, his generous soul suffered; but, knowing that any kind of pity, even the most friendly, might be offensive, he felt uncomfortable from the opposition of his thoughts and words. The two ladies at first talked of painting, for women easily guess the secret embarrassment of a first visit; perhaps they feel it too, and the nature of their minds furnishes them with a thousand resources to stop it. Whilst questioning the young man on the material process of his art, on his studies, Adelaide and her mother knew how to encourage him to talk. The indefinable trifles of their conversation prompted by kindness, naturally led Hippolyte to make remarks or reflections which showed the nature of his manners and mind. Sorrow had prematurely withered the old lady's face, doubtless beautiful in times gone by; but nothing remained

save the prominent features, the outlines, in a word, the skeleton of a physiognomy whose whole indicated great refinement, much charm in the play of the eyes where one met the expression peculiar to women of the old Court, that no words could define. These delicate, fine features might as well denote bad sentiments, imply cunning and feminine subtlety to a high degree of perversity, as betray the niceties of a beautiful mind. In fact, a woman's face is puzzling to ordinary observers for this reason, that the difference between candor and duplicity, between the spirit of intrigue and the spirit of the heart, is imperceptible. A man endowed with penetrating insight recognizes the indiscernible shades produced by a line more or less curved, a dimple more or less deepened, a projection more or less arched or prominent. Appreciation of these diagnostics is entirely in the domain of intuition, which alone detects what everyone is interested in hiding. This old lady's face was like the apartment she occupied; it seemed as difficult to know whether this poverty covered vices or great integrity, as to discover whether Adelaide's mother was an old coquette accustomed to weighing, calculating, trading upon everything, or a loving woman, full of nobleness and lovely qualities. But, at Schinner's age, the heart's first impulse is to believe in good. And so, whilst contemplating Adelaide's noble, almost haughty, forehead, whilst looking at her eyes brimming with mind and feeling, he inhaled, as it were, the sweet and modest fragrance of virtue. In

the middle of the conversation, he took the opportunity of speaking of portraits in general, so as to obtain the chance of examining the terrible pastel the colors of which had faded and the bloom, for the most part, rubbed off.

"You are doubtless attached to this painting on account of the likeness, mesdames, for the drawing is shocking?" said he, looking at Adelaide.

"It was done at Calcutta, in a great hurry," answered the mother in a tone of emotion.

She gazed at the crude sketch with that profound resignation produced by the recollections of happiness when they awaken and break upon the heart, like a kindly dew to whose cool influence one loves to yield one's self; but there was also in the expression of the old lady's face the traces of an eternal mourning. At least so the painter wished to interpret the attitude and physiognomy of his neighbor, by whose side he then seated himself.

"Madame," he said, "but a little more time and the colors of this pastel will have disappeared. The portrait will then no longer exist but in your memory. Where you now see a face that is dear to you, others will no longer see anything at all. Would you permit me to transfer this likeness to canvas? It would be more solidly fixed than it is on paper. Grant me, for the sake of our proximity, the pleasure of rendering you this service. There are hours when an artist loves to rest himself from his great compositions by doing works of less importance, so it would amuse me to repaint this head."

The old lady started at hearing these words, and Adelaide gave the painter one of those concentrated glances which seem to be a ray from the soul. Hippolyte wanted to be connected with his neighbors by some bond, and acquire the right to mingle in their life. His offer, whilst appealing to the keenest affections of the heart, was the only one he could possibly make; it satisfied his artist's pride, and could not offend the two ladies in any way. Madame Leseigneur accepted without eagerness or reluctance, but with the consciousness of a magnanimous mind which understands the extent of the bonds formed by such obligations and which speaks in favor of them, a proof of esteem.

"It seems to me," said the painter, "that this is the uniform of an officer in the Marines?"

"Yes," she said, "it is that worn by captains of vessels. Monsieur de Rouville, my husband, died at Batavia from the results of a wound received in a fight with an English vessel that he met off the coast of Asia. He was in a frigate of fifty-six guns, and the *Revenge* was a man-of-war of eighty-six. The struggle was unequal; but he defended himself so bravely, that he held up until night fell and he could escape. When I returned to France, Bonaparte was not yet in power, and I was refused a pension. When, lately, I again petitioned for it, the minister told me harshly, that, had the Baron de Rouville emigrated, I should have retained it; that he would doubtless have been rear-admiral by now; finally, His Excellency concluded by pleading

a law unknown to him upon forfeiture. I should not have taken this proceeding, to which I was urged by my friends, but for my poor Adelaide. I have always felt reluctant to hold out my hand in the name of a sorrow which robs a woman of her voice and strength. I do not like this pecuniary valuation of blood irreparably shed—"

"Mother, talking on this subject always does you harm."

At Adelaide's reminder the Baronne Leseigneur de Rouville nodded her head and was silent.

"Monsieur," said the young girl to Hippolyte, "I thought that an artist's work generally made very little noise?"

At this question, Schinner began to blush, remembering the racket he had made. Adelaide did not pursue the subject, and spared him an untruth by suddenly rising at the sound of a carriage stopping at the door; she went into her room, from which she immediately returned holding two gilded candlesticks supplied with partly burned candles which she promptly lighted; and, without waiting for the tinkle of the bell, she opened the door of the next room, where she left the lamp. The sound of a kiss given and received re-echoed right down in Hippolyte's heart. The impatience the young man felt to see the person who treated Adelaide so familiarly was not satisfied at once, the new-comers holding what seemed to him a very long conversation with the young girl, in low tones. At last, Mademoiselle de Rouville reappeared followed by

two men whose costume, physiognomy and appearance would make a long history. The first, about sixty years old, wore one of those coats designed, I believe, for Louis XVIII., who was then reigning, and in which the most troublesome jacket problem was solved by a tailor who ought to be immortalized. This artist knew, to a certainty the art of transition which was all the spirit of this politically unsettled period. Is it not a very rare merit to be able to judge one's epoch? This coat, which young men of to-day may take as a myth, was neither civil nor military and might pass in turn for either. Embroidered fleurs-de-lys adorned the facing of the skirts at the back. The gilt buttons were also stamped with fleurs-de-lys. On the shoulders, two expectant spaces called for the unnecessary epaulettes. These two warlike signs were there like a petition without a recommendation. The buttonhole of the old man's coat of royal blue cloth was decked with several ribbons. No doubt he always held his three-cornered hat trimmed with gold cord, in his hand, for the snowy side-curls of his powdered hair showed no traces of the hat's pressure. He did not look more than fifty years old, and seemed to enjoy robust health. Whilst betraying the loyal, honest character of the old refugees, his face also denoted licentious, weak morals, the loose passions and recklessness of those musketeers who were formerly renowned for their records in gallantry. His gestures, bearing and manners showed that he did not wish to

reform either his royalism, his religion, or his love affairs.

A truly fantastic figure followed this pretentious "*Louis XIV. tumbler*"—such was the nickname given by the Bonapartists to these remaining noblemen of the Monarchy;—but to thoroughly portray him, he would have to be made the principal figure in the picture of which he was only an accessory. Imagine a dry, thin person, clothed like the first, but only as it were the reflection, or shadow of him, if you will. The coat, new on one, was old and faded on the other. The powdered hair seemed less white in the second, the gold of the fleur-de-lys less brilliant, the spaces for the epaulettes more disconsolate and curled up, the intelligence weaker, the life further on the road to the fatal goal than was the first. In fact, he realized that saying of Rivarol's on Champcenetz, "It is my moonshine." He was nothing but the other's double, a poor, pale double, for there was the same difference between them as exists between the first and last proofs of a lithograph. This silent old man was a mystery to the painter and always remained a mystery. The chevalier—he was a chevalier—did not speak, and nobody spoke to him. Was he a friend, a poor relation, a man who stayed with the old gallant like a companion beside an old woman? Did he occupy a position something between a dog, a parrot, and a friend? Had he preserved the fortune or only the life of his benefactor? Was he the *Trim* to another Captain Toby? Elsewhere, as at the Baronne de

Rouville's, he always excited curiosity without ever gratifying it. Who could, under the Restoration, recall the attachment that before the Revolution had bound this chevalier to the wife of his friend, dead twenty years ago?

The person who seemed to be the freshest of these two wrecks gallantly advanced toward the Baronne de Rouville, kissed her hand, and sat down beside her. The other bowed and placed himself close to his model, at two chairs' distance. Adelaide came and leaned her elbows on the back of the arm-chair occupied by the old gentleman, imitating unconsciously, the pose that Guérin has given to Dido's sister in his celebrated picture. Although the gentleman's familiarity was fatherly, just now his liberties seemed to annoy the young girl.

"Well! you are sulky?" said he.

Then he gave Schinner one of those oblique glances full of cunning and craft, diplomatic looks whose expression betray the cautious anxiety, the polite curiosity of well-bred people, which seem to ask at sight of a stranger, "Is he one of us?"

"You see our neighbor," said the old lady to him, motioning toward Hippolyte; "monsieur is a celebrated painter, whose name you must know in spite of your indifference to art."

The gentleman recognized his old friend's malice in the omission of the name, and bowed to the young man.

"Certainly," he said, "I heard his pictures much talked of at the last Salon. Talent has great

privileges, monsieur," he added, looking at the artist's red ribbon. "This distinction, that we have to purchase at the cost of our blood and prolonged service, you gain early; but all glory claims sisterhood," he added, putting his hand on his Cross of Saint-Louis.

Hippolyte stammered a few words of thanks, and resumed his silence, contenting himself with admiring with increasing admiration the beautiful head of the young girl who had fascinated him. He very soon forgot himself in this contemplation, thinking no further of the great shabbiness of the lodging. For him, Adelaide's face stood out alone in a luminous atmosphere. He briefly answered the questions put to him and which he fortunately heard, thanks to a singular faculty our minds possess of being able in some measure to separate our thoughts occasionally. Is there anyone who has not happened to be sunk in a voluptuous or sorrowful meditation, listening to an inner voice, and yet taking part in a conversation or a reading? Wonderful dualism which often helps us to bear with tiresome people! Genial and smiling, hope rained thousands of happy thoughts upon him, and he did not want to watch his surroundings any longer.

Being a sanguine youth, it seemed to him foolish to analyze a pleasure. After a certain lapse of time, he perceived that the old lady and her daughter were playing cards with the old gentleman. As to the latter's satellite, faithful to his calling as a shadow, he stood up behind his friend who was

absorbed in the game, answering the mute questions put to him by the player, with little approving grimaces which reflected the interrogatory movements of the other physiognomy.

"Du Halga! I always lose," the old gentleman was saying.

"You discard badly," answered the Baronne de Rouville.

"I have not been able to win a single game from you for three months," he replied.

"Has Monsieur le Comte the aces?" asked the old lady.

"Yes. Still another one doomed," he said.

"Would you like me to advise you?" said Adelaide.

"No, no, stay over there. The devil! it would be too much to lose not to have you opposite me."

At last the game ended. The gentleman pulled out his purse, and, throwing two louis on the cloth, not without temper, he said:

"Forty francs! in good gold! Eh! deuce take it! it is eleven o'clock!"

"It is eleven o'clock," repeated the mute person, looking at the artist.

The young man, hearing these words a little more distinctly than all the others, thought that it was time to retire. So coming back to the world of commonplace he found some commonplace topic upon which to begin talking, bowed to the baroness, her daughter, the two strangers, and left, victim to

the first joys of true love, without trying to analyze the trifling incidents of the evening.

The next day, the young artist felt the most violent longing to see Adelaide again. Had he listened to the promptings of passion, he would have gone to see his neighbors at six o'clock in the morning, on arriving at his studio. But he still had sufficient sense to wait until the afternoon. But, as soon as he thought he could call upon Madame de Rouville, he went down, rang, not without some great heart-beatings, and, blushing like a young girl, timidly asked Mademoiselle Leseigneur, who had opened the door to him, for the portrait of the Baron de Rouville.

"But come in," said Adelaide, who had doubtless heard him coming down from his studio.

The painter followed her, confused, abashed, not knowing what to say, happiness had made him so stupid. To see Adelaide, to hear the rustling of her dress after having longed the whole morning to be near her, after having jumped up a hundred times saying, "I will go down!" and yet not going; to him, it was living so richly that such sensations over-prolonged would have destroyed his mind. The heart has a strange power of setting an extraordinary value on trifles. What joy it is to a traveler to gather a blade of grass, an unknown leaf, if he has risked his life in the search for it! The trifles of love are like this. The old lady was not in the drawing-room. When the young girl found herself alone with the painter, she brought a

chair to reach the portrait; but, finding that she could not unhook it without stepping on to the cupboard, she turned to Hippolyte and said, blushing:

"I am not tall enough. Will you get it?"

A feeling of modesty, revealed in her expression and the tone of her voice, was the true motive for this request; and the young man, taking it in this way, gave her one of those intelligent looks which are love's sweetest language. Seeing that the painter understood her, Adelaide lowered her eyes with a movement of pride whose secret belongs to virgins. Not finding a word to say, and almost intimidated, the painter then took the picture, gravely examined it in the daylight near the window, and went off without saying any more to Mademoiselle Leseigneur than:

"I will bring it back to you soon." Both of them, during this fleeting moment, experienced one of those great shocks of which the effects on the mind may be compared to those produced by the throwing of a stone into the depths of a lake. The sweetest reflections are created, and succeed each other, indefinable, complex, aimless, agitating the heart like the circular ripples which ruffle the water long after starting from the point where the stone has fallen. Hippolyte returned to his studio armed with the portrait. His easel was also provided with a canvas, a palette covered with colors; the brushes were cleaned, the position and light chosen. So, until the dinner hour, he worked at the portrait with that ardor that artists put into their caprices.

He called again the same evening at the Baronne de Rouville's, and stayed from nine till eleven. Save for different subjects of conversation this evening was almost exactly like the preceding one. The two old men arrived at the same hour, the same game of piquet took place, the same phrases were uttered by the players, the sum lost by Adelaide's friend was as large as it had been the evening before; only, Hippolyte, a little bolder, ventured to talk to the young girl.

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Eight days passed in this way, during which the feelings of the painter and Adelaide underwent those delicious, slow transformations that lead two souls to a perfect understanding. Also, day by day, the look with which Adelaide received her lover grew more friendly, more confiding, gayer and franker; her voice, her manners were somewhat more eloquent and more familiar. Schinner wished to learn piquet. Ignorant and inexperienced, he naturally made blunder after blunder; and, like the old man, he lost nearly every game. Without having as yet confessed their love to each other, the two lovers knew that they belonged to one another. Both would laugh, chatter, tell each their thoughts, talk of themselves with the ingenuousness of two children, who, in the space of a day, become as well acquainted as if they had known each other for three years. Hippolyte delighted in exercising his power over his timid little friend. Many concessions were granted him by Adelaide, who, anxious and devoted, was deceived by those pretended sulks which the dullest lover, or the most naïve young girl, will invent and employ incessantly, like spoilt children who abuse the power their mother's love yields them. In this way, all familiarities between the old count and Adelaide promptly ceased. The young girl had instinctively understood the painter's

sadness and the thoughts hidden beneath his frowning brow, from the abrupt tone in the few words he said when the old man unceremoniously kissed Adelaide's hands or neck. On her side, Mademoiselle Leseigneur soon demanded from her lover a strict account of his slightest actions; she became so unhappy and restless when Hippolyte did not come, she knew so well how to scold him for his absence, that the artist was obliged to give up seeing his friends, and frequenting society. Adelaide showed a woman's natural jealousy at learning that sometimes, upon leaving Madame de Rouville's at eleven o'clock, the artist paid more visits and went into the most brilliant circles in Paris. According to her, that kind of life was bad for the health; then, with the deep conviction to which the accent, gesture and look of a loved one give so much weight, she asserted, "that a man who was obliged to lavish so much of his time and charms of mind on several women at once, could never be the subject of a very keen affection." So the artist was led, as much by passion's despotism as by a young and loving girl's exactions, to live only in the little apartment where everything pleased him. In short, never was there a purer or more ardent love. On both sides, the same faith, the same delicacy increased their passion without the help of those sacrifices by which many people seek to prove their love. There existed between them a continual exchange of such sweet sensations, that they did not know which of the two gave or

received the most. An involuntary inclination made their union of mind always closer. The progress of this genuine sentiment was so rapid, that, two months after the accident to which the artist owed the happiness of knowing Adelaide, their life had become one life.

At daybreak, the young girl, hearing the painter's step, could say to herself, "He is there!" When Hippolyte returned to his mother at dinner time, he never missed coming to greet his neighbors; and, in the evening, he would come, at the usual hour, with all a lover's punctuality. The most tyrannical and most ambitious woman in love, could not have brought the slightest reproach against the young painter. Hence Adelaide tasted a happiness without alloy and limitless, in seeing realized in all its fullness the ideal of which at her age, it is so natural to dream. The old gentleman came less often, the jealous Hippolyte had replaced him in the evenings, at the gaming table, in his constant ill-luck at cards. And yet, in the midst of his happiness in thinking over Madame de Rouville's unfortunate situation, for he had already acquired more than one proof of her distress, a troublesome thought struck him. Several times already he had said to himself upon reaching home:

"Why! twenty francs every night?"

And he did not dare to admit to himself any invidious suspicions. He spent two months over the portrait and when it was finished, varnished and framed, he considered it as one of his best works.

Madame la Baronne de Rouville had not mentioned it to him again. Was it indifference or pride? The painter would not account to himself for this silence. He gaily plotted with Adelaide to put the portrait in its place during an absence of Madame de Rouville. So one day, during the walk her mother ordinarily took in the Tuileries, Adelaide went up alone, for the first time, to Hippolyte's studio, under the pretext of seeing the portrait in the favorable light in which it had been painted. She remained silent and motionless, victim of a delightful contemplation in which all a woman's feelings were merged into one. Are they not all summed up in admiration of the beloved one? When the painter, uneasy at this silence, leaned forward to look at the young girl, she stretched out her hand to him, unable to speak a word; but two tears had fallen; Hippolyte took her hand, covered it with kisses, and, for a moment, they looked at each other in silence, longing to confess their love, and not daring to. The painter kept Adelaide's hand in his, the same warmth and the same fluttering told them that their hearts were beating in unison. Feeling too much agitated, the young girl gently moved from Hippolyte, and said, glancing at him with a look full of naïveté:

"You will make my mother very happy!"

"What! Your mother only?" he asked.

"Oh! me! I am too much so."

The artist bent his head and was silent, frightened at the violence of the feelings roused in his

heart by the tone of these words. Then, both understanding the danger of the situation, they went down and put the portrait in its place. Hippolyte dined for the first time with the baroness, who, in her emotion and all in tears, wanted to embrace him. In the evening the old refugee, an old comrade of the Baron de Rouville, paid a visit to his two friends to tell them that he had just been appointed vice-admiral. His navigations on land through Germany and Russia had been accounted as naval campaigns. At sight of the portrait, he cordially pressed the artist's hand and cried:

"Faith! although my old carcass is not worth the trouble of preserving, I would gladly give five hundred pistoles to secure such a good likeness as that of my old Rouville."

At this offer, the baroness looked at her friend and smiled whilst the signs of a sudden gratitude flashed across her face. Hippolyte thought that the old admiral wished to offer him the price of the two portraits in paying for his own. His artist's pride, quite as much perhaps as his jealousy, took offence at this idea, and he answered:

"Monsieur, if I painted portraits, I should not have done this one."

The admiral bit his lip and began to play. The painter remained beside Adelaide, who proposed six points at piquet; he accepted. Whilst playing, he noticed in Madame de Rouville a passion for the game that surprised him. The old baroness had never yet shown so ardent a desire for gain, nor so

keen a pleasure in fingering the gentleman's gold. During the evening, evil suspicions came to disturb Hippolyte's happiness and caused him distrust. Did Madame de Rouville then live only by gambling? Was she not playing at this moment to discharge some debt, or pressed by some necessity? Perhaps she had not paid her rent. This old man seemed to be too shrewd to let his money be taken with impunity.

Some interest must attract him, a rich man, to this shabby house! Why, formerly so familiar with Adelaide, had he given up liberties acquired and owing perhaps? These reflections, which came to him involuntarily, incited him to examine the old man and the baroness, whose expressions of intelligence and certain oblique looks at himself and Adelaide annoyed him. "Could they be cheating me?" was Hippolyte's final thought, horrible and disgraceful, and in which he believed just enough to be tortured by it. He wanted to remain after the departure of the two old men to either confirm or dispel his suspicions. He drew out his purse to pay Adelaide; but, carried away by his stinging thoughts, he put it on the table, and fell into a reverie that lasted but a short time; then, ashamed of his silence, he rose, replied to some commonplace remark of Madame de Rouville, and approached her, whilst talking, to better scrutinize her old face. He went out a prey to a thousand doubts. After having gone down several steps, he went back to fetch his forgotten purse.

"I left you my purse," he said to the young girl.

"No," she answered, reddening.

"I thought it was there," he replied, pointing to the card-table.

Ashamed for Adelaide and the baroness' sake at not seeing it there, he looked at them with a stupefaction that made them laugh, grew pale, continued, whilst feeling his waistcoat:

"I must have made a mistake, no doubt I have it."

In one of the sides of the purse there were fifteen louis, in the other some small change. The theft was so flagrant, and so boldly denied, that Hippolyte had no further doubts about the morality of his neighbors; he stopped on the staircase, and walked down with difficulty; his legs shook, his head swam, he was sweating and shivering, and found he could hardly walk, struggling with the cruel shock caused by the destruction of all his hopes. From this moment, he searched his memory for a host of apparently slight evidences, but which corroborated his terrible suspicions, and which, whilst proving the reality of this last fact, opened his eyes to the character and life of these two women.

Had they then waited until the portrait was given to steal the purse? Combined, the theft seemed all the more hateful. The painter remembered, to his misfortune, that, on two or three evenings Adelaide, whilst appearing with a young girl's curiosity, to be examining the particular process of the worn silk network, was probably ascertaining the amount of

money in the purse, all in making apparently innocent jokes, but doubtless with the object of watching for the moment when the sum should be large enough to steal.

"Perhaps the old admiral has the most excellent reasons for not marrying Adelaide, and so the baroness may have tried to—"

At this supposition, he stopped, not even completing his thought, which was neutralized by a very sensible reflection:

"If the baroness," thought he, "hopes to marry me to her daughter, they would not have robbed me."

Then he tried, so as not to destroy all his illusions, and his love which was already so deeply rooted, to find some vindication of the accident.

"My purse must have fallen on the floor," he said to himself, "it may be in my arm-chair. Perhaps I have it; I am so absent!"

He searched himself rapidly, but did not find the accursed purse. Every few moments his cruel memory recalled the fatal truth to him. He could distinctly see his purse laid upon the cloth; but, having no further doubt about the theft, he then excused Adelaide, saying to himself that one should not judge unfortunates so hastily. No doubt there was some mystery in this outwardly degrading action. He would not allow that this proud and noble face could lie. And yet, this wretched apartment seemed to him denuded of all the romance of love, which beautifies everything; he saw it,

dirty and faded, considered it as the picture of an ignoble, idle, vicious home life. Are not our feelings written so to speak on the things that surround us? The next morning he rose after a sleepless night. The heart's sorrow, that serious moral sickness, had made great progress.

To lose an imaginary happiness, to give up a whole future, is more acute pain than that caused by an experienced joy, however perfect it may have been; is not hope better than memory? The reflections into which our mind suddenly plunges, are then like a shoreless sea on the bosom of which we may swim for a moment, but where our love must drown and perish. And it is an awful death. Are not our feelings the most brilliant part of our life? From this partial death there result, in certain delicate or vigorous organizations, the fearful ravages produced by disenchantments, by hopes and passions betrayed. So it was with the young painter. He went out very early, and went for a walk under the refreshing shade of the Tuileries, absorbed in his thoughts, oblivious to the whole world. There, by chance, he met one of his most intimate friends, a college and studio companion, with whom he had lived more happily than with a brother.

"Well! Hippolyte! what's the matter with you?" said François Souchet, a young sculptor who had just carried off the *grand prix* and was soon starting for Italy.

"I am very unhappy," answered Hippolyte, gravely.

"Then it is only a love affair that could sadden you. Money, glory, esteem, you have everything."

Insensibly confidences began, and the painter confessed his love. The moment he mentioned the Rue de Suresnes and a young lady lodging on the fourth floor:

"Stop!" cried Souchet gaily; "that is a little girl whom I see going every morning to the Assumption, and whom I am courting. But, my dear fellow, we all know her. Her mother is a baroness! Do you believe in baronesses who lodge on the fourth floor? Brrr! Ah! well, you are a man of the Golden Age. We see the old mother every day in this alley; but she has a figure, an appearance, which tell all. What! you have not guessed the sort of woman she is from the way she holds her bag?"

The two friends walked for a long time, and several young men who knew Souchet or Schinner joined them. The painter's adventure, looked upon as of little importance, was related to them by the sculptor.

"He also," he said, "has seen that little one!"

There followed remarks, laughs, and the innocent mockery marked by the gaiety which is familiar to artists, but which made Hippolyte suffer horribly. A certain modesty of mind made him uncomfortable in seeing his heart's secret treated so lightly, his passion dissected, torn to shreds, and a young unknown girl whose life appeared so simple, subjected to real or false judgments delivered with so much heedlessness. He pretended to be moved

by a spirit of contradiction, he seriously asked each one for the proofs of his assertions, and the jokes began again.

"But, my dear fellow, have you seen the baroness' shawl?" said Souchet.

"Have you followed the little one when she trots every morning to the Assumption?" said Joseph Bridau, a young pupil in Gros's studio.

"Ah! the mother has, amongst other virtues, a certain grey dress which I consider a model," said Bixiou, the caricaturist.

"Listen, Hippolyte," resumed the sculptor, "come here about four o'clock, and analyze a little the mother's and daughter's walk. If, after that, you still have doubts! well, we shall never make anything of you; you would be capable of marrying your porter's daughter."

Tormented by the most conflicting sentiments, the painter left his friends. It seemed to him that Adelaide and her mother must be above these accusations, and he felt, at the bottom of his heart, remorse for having suspected the purity of this beautiful, simple young girl. He went to his studio, passed by the door of Adelaide's apartment, and felt a pang which deceives no man. He loved Mademoiselle de Rouville so passionately, that, in spite of the theft of the purse, he still adored her. His love resembled that of the Chevalier des Grieux admiring and purifying his mistress even on the cart which takes lost women to prison.

"Why should not my love make her the purest of

all women? Why abandon her to evil and vice, without stretching out a friendly hand?"

The idea of this mission delighted him. Love makes the best of everything. Nothing fascinates a young man more than to play the part of a good genius to a woman. There is an indescribable romance in the enterprise, which suits exalted minds. Is it not the greatest devotion in the most lofty, the most gracious form? Is there not some greatness in knowing that one loves enough to still love when the love of others fades and dies out? Hippolyte sat down in his studio, contemplated his picture without working at it, seeing the figures through tears that rolled from his eyes, always holding the brush in his hand, approaching the canvas as if to soften some tint and not touching it.

Night came and found him in this attitude. Roused from his reverie by the darkness, he went down, met the old admiral on the stairs, gave him a lurid look as he bowed, and fled. He had intended going in to see his neighbors, but the sight of Adelaide's protector froze his heart and changed his resolution. He asked himself for the hundredth time what motive could draw this old intriguer, with eighty thousand francs a year, to this fourth floor where he lost about forty francs every night; and he thought he could guess what motive it was. The next and following days, Hippolyte threw himself into his work in an attempt to fight his passion by the enthusiasm of ideas and the ardor of conception. He half succeeded. Study consoled him without,

however, stifling the recollections of so many tender hours passed with Adelaide. One evening, in leaving his studio, he found the door of the two ladies' apartment half open. Someone was standing up, in the embrasure of the window. The arrangement of the door and the staircase made it impossible for the painter to pass without seeing Adelaide; he bowed coldly, giving her a look full of indifference; but, judging this young girl's sufferings by his own, he felt an inward qualm in thinking of the bitterness this look and coldness must cause a loving heart. To crown the sweetest pleasures that ever rejoiced two pure souls, by a week's disdain, by the deepest scorn, the most obstinate—horrible ending! Perhaps the purse had been found, and perhaps, every evening, Adelaide had expected her friend. This simple, natural thought caused the lover fresh remorse; he asked himself whether the proofs of attachment the young girl had shown him, the delightful talks, breathing of a love that had charmed him, did not merit at least one inquiry, were not worth some justification. Ashamed of having resisted the desire of his heart for a whole week, and feeling that this opposition was almost criminal, he called the same evening upon Madame de Rouville. All his suspicions, all his evil thoughts, vanished at sight of the pale, attenuated young girl.

"Eh! good God! what's the matter with you?" he said to her after having greeted the baroness.

Adelaide did not answer, but gave him a look full

of sorrow, a dreary, discouraged look which hurt him.

"You have doubtless been working very hard," said the old lady, "you are altered. We are the cause of your seclusion. The portrait must have delayed some pictures which are of consequence to your reputation."

Hippolyte was pleased to find so good an excuse for his incivility.

"Yes," he said, "I have been extremely busy; but I have suffered—"

At these words, Adelaide raised her head, looked at her lover, and her anxious eyes reproached him no more.

"Did you then suppose we were very indifferent as to whether you might be happy or unhappy?" said the old lady.

"I was wrong," he said, "and yet, there are some sufferings that one could not confide to any one, not even to an earlier affection than that with which you honor me—"

"Sincerity, and the strength of friendship, should not be measured by time. I have known old friends not to shed a tear in misfortune," said the baroness, tossing her head.

"But what is the matter with you?" asked the young man of Adelaide.

"Oh! nothing," answered the baroness, "Adelaide has spent several nights in finishing some work, and would not listen to me when I told her that one day more or less was of little consequence—"

Hippolyte was not listening. Seeing these two noble, serene faces, he was ashamed of his suspicions, and attributed the loss of his purse to some mysterious accident. The evening was sweet to him and perhaps to her too. There are secrets which young minds understand so well! Adelaide guessed Hippolyte's thoughts. Without wishing to confess his errors, the painter acknowledged them, and returned to his mistress more loving and more affectionate, trying thus to win a tacit pardon. Adelaide was tasting such perfect, sweet joy that she thought all the misery which had so cruelly bruised her soul was not too much to pay for it. The really genuine harmony of their hearts, this magic understanding was, nevertheless, troubled by a word from the Baronne de Rouville.

"Shall we make up our little game?" she said, "for my old Kergarouët is very hard upon me."

These words reawakened all the young painter's fears, and he reddened in looking at Adelaide's mother, but he saw nothing in her face but an expression of honest kindliness; no hidden intention destroyed the charm, the delicacy was in no sense treacherous; the mischief in it seemed harmless, and no remorse disturbed her calm. So he sat down at the card-table. Adelaide wished to share the painter's lot, asserting that he did not know piquet and needed a partner. Madame de Rouville and her daughter, during the game, exchanged signs of intelligence which made Hippolyte all the more uneasy in that he was winning; but, in the end, a last trick placed

the two lovers in the baroness' debt. Intending to look in his pocket for money, the painter drew his hands from beneath the table, and then saw before him a purse that Adelaide had slipped there unbeknown to him; the poor child was holding the old one, and to keep herself in countenance was searching it for the money to pay her mother. All Hippolyte's blood rushed so violently to his heart, that he nearly lost consciousness. The new purse replacing his own, and which contained his fifteen louis, was embroidered with gold beads. The knots and tassels all testified to Adelaide's good taste, and no doubt she had spent all her evenings on the decorations of this charming piece of work. It would have been impossible to have said with more delicacy that the painter's gift could only be requited by a mark of affection. When Hippolyte, overcome with happiness, turned his eyes on Adelaide and on the baroness, he saw them trembling with pleasure and delighted with this charming trick. He felt humbled, mean, and foolish; he would like to have punished himself, to have rent his heart. Tears came to his eyes, he rose under an irresistible impulse, took Adelaide in his arms, pressed her to his heart and overwhelmed her with kisses; then, with all an artist's good faith:

"Let me make her my wife!" he cried, looking at the baroness.

Adelaide looked at the painter half angrily, and Madame de Rouville, a little astonished, was seeking a reply, when this scene was interrupted by the

ringing of the bell. The old vice-admiral appeared followed by his shadow and by Madame Schinner. After having guessed the cause of the grief which her son vainly tried to hide from her, Hippolyte's mother had made enquiries from several of her friends about Adelaide. Justly alarmed by the calumnies which hung over this young girl unknown to the Comte de Kergarouët, whose name was told her by the porter, she had gone to relate them to the vice-admiral, who, in his anger, "would have liked," he said, "to have cut off these rascals' ears." Excited by his anger, the admiral had told Madame Schinner the secret of his voluntary losses at cards, since the baroness' pride only left him this ingenious method of helping.

When Madame Schinner had greeted Madame de Rouville, the latter looked at the Comte de Kergarouët, the Chevalier du Halga, an old friend of the late Comtesse de Kergarouët, Hippolyte and Adelaide, and gracefully said: "It seems that we are a family party to-night."

Paris, May, 1832.

THE VENDETTA

TO PUTTINATI

A MILANESE SCULPTOR

THE VENDETTA

*

In the year 1800, towards the end of the month of October, a stranger, accompanied by a woman and a little girl, arrived at the Tuileries, in Paris, and stood rather a long time beside the ruins of a recently demolished house, upon the spot now occupied by the wing which has been begun, to unite the château of Catherine de Médici to the Louvre des Valois. He remained there standing, with his arms folded, his head bent, although he occasionally raised it to look alternately at the consular palace, and at his wife, who was seated near him on a stone. Although the strange woman appeared to be absorbed in playing with the long black hair of the little nine- or ten-year-old girl, she did not lose any of the looks her companion gave her. The same feeling, other than love, united these two beings, and inspired the same anxiety in their actions and thoughts. Misery is, perhaps, the most powerful of all ties. The stranger possessed one of those grand, massive heads with abundant hair, that have so often formed a study for the brush of the Caracci. His black hair was largely streaked with white. Although noble and haughty, his features had a

hard expression which spoilt them. In spite of his strength and upright figure, he seemed to be more than sixty. His shabby clothes showed that he came from a distant country. Although the once beautiful, but now faded face of the woman betrayed profound sadness, when her husband looked at her she forced a smile and assumed a calm countenance. The little girl was standing, in spite of the traces of fatigue in her sunburnt face. She had an Italian appearance, great black eyes beneath strongly arched eyebrows; a natural nobility, a true grace. More than one passer-by felt moved at the lonely aspect of this group, the members of which made not the slightest effort to conceal a despair as deep as its expression was simple; but the fountain of this fleeting kindness which distinguishes Parisians was promptly dried up. As soon as the stranger thought himself the object of some idler's attention, he would look at him with so fierce an air that the boldest loiterer hastened his step as if he had trodden on a snake. After remaining for a long time in indecision, the big stranger suddenly passed his hand across his brow, and chased away, as it were, the thoughts that had furrowed it with wrinkles, and doubtless took some desperate resolution. After casting a piercing look at his wife and daughter, he drew a long dagger from his vest, held it out to his wife, and said to her in Italian:

"I am going to see if the Bonapartes remember us."

And he walked with a slow, steady step towards

the entrance to the palace, where he was naturally stopped by a soldier of the consular guard with whom he could not argue long. Seeing the stranger's obstinacy, the sentinel presented his bayonet by way of an *ultimatum*. Chance ordained that at this moment the soldier's watch should be relieved and the corporal very obligingly showed the stranger in which direction to find the commander of the guard-house.

"Tell Bonaparte that Bartolomeo di Piombo would like to speak with him," said the Italian to the captain on duty.

In vain the officer reminded Bartolomeo that no one could see the First Consul without having previously written to ask for an audience, the stranger absolutely insisted that the soldier should go and inform Bonaparte. The officer put forward the rules of the orders, and plainly refused to obey the request of this singular petitioner. Bartolomeo frowned, gave the commander a terrible look, and seemed to hold him responsible for all the misery that this refusal might occasion; then he was silent, resolutely crossed his arms over his chest, and went to station himself under the portico communicating with the courtyard and the Tuileries garden. People who wish a thing very strongly are nearly always helped by chance. Just as Bartolomeo di Piombo was seating himself on one of the boundary stones that are near the entrance to the Tuileries, a carriage drove up, from which descended Lucien Bonaparte, then Minister of the Interior.

"Ah! Loucian, how lucky for me to meet you!" cried the stranger.

These words, uttered in a Corsican patois, stopped Lucien just as he was springing under the archway; he looked at his compatriot and recognized him. At the first word whispered by Bartolomeo, he led the Corsican with him. Murat, Lannes and Rapp were in the First Consul's private room. Lucien's entrance, followed by such a singular man as Piombo, stopped the conversation. Lucien took Napoléon's hand and led him into the recess of the window. After having exchanged a few words with his brother, the First Consul made a sign with his hand that Murat and Lannes obeyed in retiring. Rapp pretended to have seen nothing, so as to be able to remain. Bonaparte having spoken to him sharply, the aide-de-camp went out reluctantly. The First Consul, hearing the sound of Rapp's footsteps in the next salon, went out brusquely and saw him close to the wall separating his cabinet from the salon.

"Then you will not understand me?" said the First Consul, "I want to be alone with my fellow-countryman."

"A Corsican," answered the aide-de-camp, "I distrust those people too much not to—"

The First Consul could not help smiling, and lightly pushed his faithful officer away by the shoulders.

"Well, what have you come here for, my poor Bartolomeo?" said the First Consul to Piombo.

"To ask you for shelter and protection, if you

are a true Corsican," answered Bartolomeo, brusquely.

"What misfortune has driven you from the country? You were the richest, the most—"

"I have killed all the Porta," replied the Corsican in a deep voice, knitting his brows.

The First Consul started back as if in surprise.

"You will betray me?" cried Bartolomeo, giving Bonaparte a dark look. "Do you know that there are still four more Piombo in Corsica?"

Lucien seized his compatriot's arm and shook it.

"Have you come here then to threaten the Savior of France," he said sharply.

Bonaparte made a sign to Lucien, who held his tongue. Then he looked at Piombo, and said:

"Why did you kill the Porta?"

"We had made friends," he replied, "the Barbanti had reconciled us. The day after we had been drinking together to drown our quarrels, I left them because I had business at Bastia. They remained at my house and set fire to my vine at Longone. They killed my son Gregorio. My daughter Ginevra and my wife escaped them; they had received the Sacrament in the morning, the Virgin had protected them. When I returned, I could not find my house, I was seeking it with my feet in its ashes. All of a sudden I stumbled against Gregorio's body, which I recognized by the light of the moon. 'Oh! the Porta have struck the blow!' I said to myself. I went at once to the woods, I there collected several men to whom I had rendered

some service, do you understand, Bonaparte? and we marched against the Porta's vine. We arrived at five in the morning; at seven, they were all before God. Giacomo declares that Elisa Vanni saved a child, the little Luigi; but I fastened him to his bed myself before setting fire to the house. I left the island with my wife and child without being able to ascertain whether Luigi Porta still lived."

Bonaparte looked at Bartolomeo with curiosity, but no astonishment.

"How many of them were there?" asked Lucien.

"Seven," replied Piombo; "they were your persecutors at one time."

These words roused no expression of hatred from the two brothers.

"Ah! you are Corsicans no longer!" cried Bartolomeo with a sort of despair, "Good-bye. Formerly I protected you," he added, in a reproachful tone, "without me, your mother would never have reached Marseilles," he said to Bonaparte, who was standing full of thought, leaning his elbow upon the mantel-piece.

"Conscientiously, Piombo," answered Napoléon, "I cannot take you under my wing. I am now the head of a great nation, I command the Republic, and must see that the laws are executed."

"Ah! ah!" said Bartolomeo.

"But I can shut my eyes," continued Bonaparte, "the prejudice of the *vendetta* will prevent the reigning of all laws in Corsica for a long time," he added,

speaking to himself. "And yet it must be destroyed at all costs."

Bonaparte was silent for a moment, and Lucien signed to Piombo to say nothing. The Corsican was already shaking his head disapprovingly from right to left.

"Stay here," resumed the Consul, addressing Bartolomeo, "we shall know nothing. I will have your property bought, so as to give you, in the first place, the means of subsistence. Then, after a time, later on, we will think of you. But no more *vendetta!* There are no thickets here. If you play with a dagger, there will be no pardon to hope for. Here, the law protects all citizens, and one does not execute justice for one's self."

"He has made himself chief of a strange country," answered Bartolomeo, taking Lucien's hand and squeezing it; "but you remember me in misfortune, there will now be eternal friendship between us, and you may dispose of all the Piombo."

At these words, the Corsican's brow cleared, and he looked round with satisfaction.

"It is not bad here," he said smiling, as if he would have liked to stay there. "And you are dressed all in red, like a cardinal."

"It only depends upon you to be successful and have a palace in Paris," said Bonaparte, measuring his fellow countryman. "It will often happen that I shall look around me in search of a faithful friend in whom I can trust."

A sigh of joy burst from Piombo's great chest,

and he held out his hand to the First Consul, saying:

"There is still some of the Corsican in you!"

Bonaparte smiled. He silently looked at this man, who brought him in some sort the air of his native land, that island where he had but lately been so miraculously saved from the hatred of the *English party*, and which he was not to see again. He made a sign to his brother, who led away Bartolomeo di Piombo. Lucien enquired with interest into the financial position of his family's former protector. Piombo led the Minister of the Interior to a window, and showed him his wife and Ginevra, both sitting on a heap of stones.

"We have walked here from Fontainebleau, and we have not a farthing," he said.

Lucien gave his purse to his compatriot and advised him to come and find him the next day, so as to consider the best means of assuring the position of his family. The total value of Piombo's possessions in Corsica would scarcely enable him to live properly in Paris.

Fifteen years elapsed between the arrival of the Piombo family in Paris, and the following adventure, which, without an account of these events, would have been less intelligible.

*

Servin, one of our most distinguished artists, was the first to conceive the idea of opening a studio for young girls who wished to take painting lessons. Forty years old, highly moral, and entirely devoted to his art, he had made a love match with a daughter of a penniless general. At first the mothers themselves brought their daughters to the professor's; then they finished by sending them, when they came to know his principles and appreciate the care he took to deserve confidence. It was part of the painter's scheme only to accept as students young ladies belonging to rich or respected families so as to avoid reproach for the character of his studio; he even refused to take young girls who wished to become artists and to whom he would have been obliged to give certain instructions without which there is no talent possible in painting. By degrees the prudence, the superiority with which he initiated his pupils into the secrets of art, the certainty felt by the mothers in knowing their daughters to be in the company of well-bred young girls, and the security inspired by the character, morals, and marriage of the artist, gained him an excellent reputation in fashionable circles. When a young girl expressed a desire to learn painting or drawing, and her mother asked advice, "Send her to Servin!" was everyone's reply. So Servin became a specialty

for feminine painting, like Herbault for hats, Leroy for fashions and Chevet for edibles. It was observed that a young woman who had taken lessons at Servin's could give a final judgment on the pictures of the Musée, paint a portrait uncommonly well, copy a picture and paint her genre picture. This artist accordingly satisfied all the requirements of the aristocracy. In spite of his relations with the best houses in Paris, he was independent, patriotic, and maintained with everyone that light, witty and sometimes ironical tone, and liberty of opinion which distinguishes the artist. He had carried the strictness of his precautions even to the arrangement of the room where his pupils studied. The entrance to the attic which extended over his rooms had been walled up. To reach this retreat, as sacred as a harem, it was necessary to ascend a staircase contrived inside his residence. The studio, which took up the whole of the top of the house, presented those enormous proportions which always surprise onlookers, when, having climbed sixty feet from the ground, they expect to see artists lodging in the gutter. This species of gallery was profusely lighted by immense glass windows furnished with those great green blinds with which painters regulate the light. A crowd of caricatures, heads in outline, either done in color or with the point of a knife upon the dark-gray painted walls, proved, save for the difference in expression, that the most refined girls have as much extravagance of imagination as men can have. A little stove and its great pipes,

describing a hideous zigzag before reaching the higher regions of the roof, was an inevitable decoration in this studio. A shelf ran all round the walls supporting plaster models which were lying in confusion, most of them covered with yellow dust. Above this shelf, here and there, a head of Niobe hanging on a nail could be seen in its mournful pose; a Venus smiling; a hand suddenly thrust before one's eyes, like that of a beggar asking alms; then several *écorchés*, yellowed by smoke, looking like limbs just torn from coffins; in short, the paintings, drawings, dummies, the pictureless frames and frameless pictures combined to give this untidy apartment the appearance of a studio remarkable for a singular mixture of ornament and nakedness, poverty and wealth, of care and indifference. This enormous interior, where everything, even man, appears small, savors of the green-room of the Opera; there is old linen, gilded armor, fragments of cloth, and mechanism; but there is an indefinable grandeur like thought; genius and death are there; Diana or Apollo alongside a skull or a skeleton, beauty and confusion, poetry and reality, rich colors in shadow, and often a whole still and silent drama. How symbolical of an artist's mind!

At the time this story begins, a brilliant July sun was illumining the studio, and two rays, traversing its extent, formed great bands of diaphanous gold sparkling with grains of dust. A dozen easels reared their pointed heads, like masts of vessels in a port. Several young girls enlivened this scene with the

variety of their physiognomies, their attitudes, and the difference in their costumes. The strong shadows cast by the green serges, placed according to the requirements of each easel, produced a multitude of contrasts, and piquant effects of light and shade. This group was the most beautiful of all the pictures in the studio. One young, fair girl, simply dressed, was sitting apart from her companions, working bravely whilst seeming to anticipate unsuccess; nobody looked at her or spoke a word to her; she was the prettiest, the most modest and the poorest of them. Two principal groups, separated by a slight space, indicated two parties and two spirits even in this studio where all ranks and fortune ought to have been forgotten. Sitting or standing, these young girls, surrounded by their color boxes, playing with or preparing their brushes, handling their shining palettes, painting, talking, laughing, singing, giving way to nature, and betraying their characters, formed a sight unknown to men: this one, proud, haughty, capricious, with black hair and beautiful hands, casting her bright glance at random; that one, heedless and gay, with smiling lips, brown hair, white and delicate hands, a French maiden, volatile, without a secret thought and living only in the present; another, dreamy, melancholy, pale, and drooping her head like a falling flower; her neighbor, on the other hand, big, indolent, of Mussulman habits, with a long, black dewy eye; talking little but meditating, and stealthily looking at the head of Antinous. In the

midst of them, like the *jocoso* in a Spanish play, full of wit and epigrammatic sallies, was a girl, watching them all at a glance, making them laugh and incessantly lifting her face which was too lively not to be pretty; she was the leader of the first group of pupils, which included the daughters of bankers, solicitors and merchants; all rich, but experiencing all the imperceptible, though stinging disdain lavished upon them by the other young ladies of the aristocracy. These were governed by the daughter of an usher in the king's cabinet, a little creature, as foolish as she was vain, and proud of owning as father a man *having a post* at Court; she always wished to appear as if she had understood the master's remarks at once, and seemed to work as a favor; she used an eyeglass, always came very much dressed up, and late, and used to implore her companions to speak softly. In this second group one might have remarked some delicious figures and refined faces; but there was very little simplicity in the looks of these young girls. Even if their attitudes were elegant and their movements graceful, their faces lacked candor, and one could easily guess that they belonged to a world where politeness early fashions characters, where the abuse of social pleasures kills all sentiment and develops egotism. When this party was complete, there were amongst the number some young girls with childish heads, virgins of a lovely purity, faces whose slightly parted lips, upon which a virgin smile played, disclosed virgin teeth. The studio did not then

resemble a seraglio, but a group of angels seated on a cloud in the sky. At mid-day, Servin had not yet appeared. For several days, he had remained, for the greater part of his time, at a studio that he had elsewhere and where he was finishing a picture for the Exhibition. All of a sudden, Mademoiselle Amélie Thirion, leader of the aristocratic party in this little assembly, entered into a long conversation with her neighbor; there was a great silence in the group of patricians. The astonished banking party were silent too, and tried to guess the subject of such a conference; but the secret of the young *ultras* soon became known. Amélie rose, took up an easel that was standing near her and replaced it at a somewhat marked distance from the noble group, close to a rough partition which divided the studio from a dark closet where the broken casts, the pictures condemned by the professor and the store of wood for the winter use were kept. Amélie's action excited a murmur of astonishment which did not prevent her from completing this removal by quickly wheeling the paint-box and stool close up to the easel, everything, even to a picture by Prudhon, which her companion, now absent, was in course of copying. After this coup d'état, although the right side set to work silently, the left side held forth at great length.

"What will Mademoiselle Piombo say?" one young girl asked Mademoiselle Mathilde Roguin, the mischievous oracle of the first group.

"She is not one to talk," she replied, "but, fifty

years hence, she will remember this insult as if it had been yesterday, and will avenge herself cruelly. She is a person with whom I should not care to be at war."

"The banishment which these young ladies inflict upon her is all the more unjust," said another young girl, "as the day before yesterday Ginevra was very unhappy; her father, they said, had just tendered his resignation. This will only add to her sorrow, whilst she was exceedingly kind to these young ladies during the Hundred Days. Has she ever said a word to wound them? On the contrary, she avoided talking politics. But our *ultras* seem to be actuated by jealousy rather than by party spirit."

"I have a good mind to go and fetch Mademoiselle Piombo's easel and place it next mine," said Mathilde Roguin.

She got up, but upon thinking it over, sat down again. "With such a character as Mademoiselle Ginevra's," she said, "one can never tell how she might take our attentions; let us await results."

"*Ecco la*," languidly said the young girl with the black eyes.

Indeed, the sound of somebody's footsteps ascending the stairs resounded in the room. The words "Here she comes!" passed from mouth to mouth, and the deepest silence reigned in the studio.

In order to understand the importance of the ostracism exercised by Amélie Thirion, it is necessary to add that this scene took place toward the

end of July, 1815. The second return of the Bourbons had just disturbed many friendships which had withstood the agitations of the first Restoration. At this moment, many families, nearly all divided in opinion, repeated several of those deplorable scenes which stain the history of all countries in times of civil or religious war. Children, young girls, old men all shared the monarchical fever which possessed the government. Discord was insinuating itself beneath all roofs, and distrust tinged the actions and conversations of the most intimate friends with its sombre colors. Ginevra Piombo idolized Napoléon, and how could she have hated him! The Emperor was her fellow-countryman and her father's benefactor. Of Napoléon's servants, the Baron de Piombo had been the one to co-operate most efficaciously in the return from the island of Elba. Incapable of renouncing his political faith, anxious even, to proclaim it, the old Baron de Piombo remained in Paris in the midst of his enemies. Ginevra Piombo accordingly was all the more likely to be numbered amongst suspected persons, in that she made no concealment of the grief her family felt at the second Restoration. The only tears she had, perhaps, ever shed in her life were those wrung from her by the double news of Bonaparte's captivity on the *Bellerophon* and Labédoyère's arrest.

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The young girls who composed the group of nobles belonged to the most exalted royalist families in Paris. It is difficult to give any idea of the excesses of this period and the horror with which the Bonapartists were regarded.

Insignificant and petty as Amélie Thirion's action may appear now-a-days, it was at that time an expression of very natural hatred. Ginevra Piombo, one of Servin's first pupils, occupied a place of which they had wished to deprive her from the day she had entered the studio; the aristocratic group had gradually surrounded her; to drive her from a place which in some measure belonged to her, was not only injuring her, but causing her a kind of suffering; for all artists have some place of preference to work in. But political animadversion possibly had very little to do with the behavior of this little right-hand quarter of the studio. Ginevra Piombo, the cleverest of all Servin's pupils, was an object of the deepest jealousy; the master professed as much admiration for the talents as the character of this favorite pupil, who was held up as an example in all his comparisons; in short, without being able to explain the influence that this young girl obtained over all around her, she exerted over this little world a prestige almost similar to that of Bonaparte over his soldiers. For some days the

aristocracy of the studio had resolved upon the downfall of the queen; but, nobody having yet dared to separate herself from the Bonapartist, Mademoiselle Thirion had just struck a decisive blow, in order to make her companions accomplices in her hatred. Although Ginevra was sincerely loved by two or three of the Royalists, nearly all of whom had been lectured at home about politics, they decided, with that tact which is peculiar to women, that they had better remain neutral in the quarrel. Accordingly, upon her arrival Ginevra was greeted with a profound silence. Of all the young girls who until then had come to Servin's studio, she was the most beautiful, the tallest and the best formed. Her bearing bore a stamp of nobleness and grace which commanded respect. Her face, full of intelligence, seemed almost radiant, so strongly did it breathe of the animation peculiarly Corsican and which in no way precludes tranquillity. Her long hair, her eyes and dark lashes told of passion. Although the corners of her mouth were softly moulded and her lips were a little too prominent, they expressed that goodness which the consciousness of their power gives to strong beings. By an extraordinary caprice of nature, the charm of her face was, to a certain extent, belied by a marble forehead marked by an almost fierce pride, betokening the manners of Corsica. There was the only bond between her and her native country; in all the rest of her person, the simplicity, and graceful ease of the Lombardian beauty were so fascinating, that

one could not look at her and cause her the least pain. She was so intensely attractive, that, as a precaution, her father had her accompanied to the studio. The only defect in this truly poetical creature arose from the power itself of so fully developed a beauty: she had the appearance of a woman. She had refused to marry from love of her father and mother, feeling herself necessary to their old age. Her taste for painting had compensated for the passions which usually disturb women.

"You are very quiet to-day, mesdemoiselles," she said, after having taken two or three steps amongst her companions. — "Good-morning, my little Laure," she added in a gentle, caressing tone, approaching the young girl who was painting apart from the others, "this head is very good! The flesh tints are a little too pink, but it is all wonderfully drawn!"

Laure raised her head, looked at Ginevra tenderly, and their faces brightened whilst expressing the same affection. A faint smile played upon the Italian's lips, she seemed dreamy, and proceeded slowly towards her place, carelessly glancing at drawings or pictures, saying good-morning to each of the young girls of the first group, without observing the unusual curiosity her presence excited. One would have said she was a queen surrounded by her court. She paid not the least attention to the profound silence which reigned amongst the patricians, and passed in front of the party without saying a single word. So great was her preoccupation

that she settled herself at her easel, opened her paint-box, took her brushes, put on her brown sleeves, arranged her apron, looked at her picture, and examined her palette without thinking, so to speak, of what she was doing. All heads in the bourgeois group were turned towards her. If the young ladies of the Thirion party did not show their impatience so openly as their companions, their glances were none the less directed at Ginevra.

"She notices nothing," said Mademoiselle Roguin.

At this moment, Ginevra dropped the meditative attitude in which she had been contemplating her canvas, and turned her head towards the aristocratic group. With a glance she measured the distance that separated her from them and remained silent.

"She does not believe that anyone could have thought of insulting her," said Mathilde, "she did not grow pale or red. How vexed these young ladies will be, if she prefers her new place to the old one! You are out of line there, mademoiselle," she then added aloud to Ginevra.

The Italian pretended not to hear, or it may be that she really did not hear; she suddenly rose, slowly skirted the partition dividing the dark closet from the studio, and appeared to be examining the window from which the light came, making it of so much importance that she got up on a chair to fasten the green serge that intercepted the light, much higher. Having attained this height, she came upon a slight chink in the partition, the real object

of her efforts, for the look she cast through it can only be compared to that of a miser discovering Aladdin's treasures: she quickly got down, returned to her place, adjusted her picture, pretended to be dissatisfied with the light, drew a table to the partition upon which she placed a chair, nimbly climbed upon this scaffold and again looked through the crack. She only cast one glance into the closet, then lighted by a skylight that some one had opened, and what she saw there caused her so violent a sensation, that she started.

"You will fall, Mademoiselle Ginevra!" cried Laure. All looked at the imprudent girl who was tottering. The fear lest her companions should crowd round her lent her courage. She recovered her strength and her balance, turned to Laure whilst swinging herself on her chair and said in trembling tones: "Bah! at least it is a little firmer than a throne!"

She hurriedly fastened the serge, got down, pushed the table and chair far away from the partition, returned to her easel, and made several more trials as if she were seeking a mass of light to suit her. She was hardly thinking of her picture, her object was to be near the dark closet, beside which she fixed herself as she wished, close to the door. Then she set about preparing her palette, maintaining the most profound silence. Upon this spot, she soon heard more distinctly the slight noise, which, the day before, had so strongly excited her curiosity and caused her youthful imagination to travel all

over the vast field of conjecture. She easily recognized the deep, regular breathing of the sleeping man she had just seen. Her curiosity was satisfied beyond her desires, but she found herself burdened by a tremendous responsibility. Through the crevice, she had caught a glimpse of the imperial eagle, and, on a feebly-lighted bed of sacking, the figure of an officer of the guard. She guessed all; Servin was concealing a fugitive. Now, she trembled lest any of her companions should come to examine her picture and overhear the wretched man's respiration or too loud breathing, like that which had reached her ears during the last lesson. She resolved to remain close to this door, trusting to her own skill to baffle the chances of fate.

"It is better that I should be here," she thought, "to prevent any evil accident, than leave the poor prisoner at the mercy of some blunder."

Such was the secret of the apparent indifference Ginevra had shown at finding her easel disarranged; inwardly she was delighted, since she had been able to satisfy her curiosity so naturally; besides, at this moment, she was too deeply preoccupied to seek the reason of her removal. Nothing is more mortifying to young girls, as well as to everybody, than to see a spiteful trick, an insult or a witticism failing in its effect in consequence of the disdain shown by the victim. It seems as if hatred towards an enemy grows in proportion to the superiority with which he rises above us. Ginevra's conduct was a mystery to all her companions. Her

friends as well as her enemies were equally surprised; for they granted all possible good qualities but that of forgiving an injury. Although the incidents of studio life had very rarely offered Ginevra any opportunity of displaying this defect of character, the examples she had been able to give of her vindictive disposition and firmness, had none the less left a deep impression in the minds of her companions. After much conjecture, Mademoiselle Roguin ended by thinking that the Italian's silence showed a grandeur of soul above all praise; and her circle, incited by her, formed a scheme for humiliating the aristocracy of the studio. They gained their object by a fire of sarcasms which humbled the pride of the right-hand party. The arrival of Madame Servin put an end to this struggle of amour-propre. With the cunning that always accompanies spitefulness, Amélie had noticed, analyzed and put a construction upon the amazing preoccupation which prevented Ginevra hearing the acidly polite dispute of which she was the subject.

The revenge obtained by Mademoiselle Roguin and her companions over Mademoiselle Thirion and her group, then had the fatal effect of causing the young ultras to inquire into the reason for Ginevra di Piombo's silence. The beautiful Italian thus became the centre of all looks, and was watched by her friends and enemies alike. It is very hard to hide the slightest emotion, the least feeling from fifteen young inquisitive idle girls, whose malice and intelligence ask nothing better than to guess secrets,

to create and baffle intrigues, and who are too clever in finding different interpretations for a gesture, a glance, or a word not to be able to discover its true meaning. Therefore, Ginevra di Piombo's secret was soon in great danger of becoming known. At this moment, Madame Servin's presence caused an interval in the drama which was being secretly acted at the bottom of these young hearts, the sentiments, thoughts and progress of which were expressed by almost allegorical phrases, by malicious glances, gestures, and even by silence, often more intelligible than words. As soon as Madame Servin entered the studio, her eyes fell upon the door near Ginevra. Under the present circumstances, this look was not lost. If, at first, none of the pupils paid any attention to it, later on Mademoiselle Thirion remembered it, and accounted for the mistrust, fear and mystery which at that time gave a certain hunted look to Madame Servin's eyes.

"Mesdemoiselles," she said, "Monsieur Servin will not be able to come to-day."

Then she complimented each young lady, while receiving from all of them a great many of those feminine caresses which are shown as much in the voice and look as in action. She quickly reached Ginerva, governed by an anxiety which she vainly strove to hide. The Italian and the painter's wife exchanged a friendly nod, and both remained silent, the one painting, the other looking on. The soldier's breathing could easily be heard, but Madame Servin appeared not to notice it; and so good was

her dissimulation, that Ginevra was tempted to accuse her of voluntary deafness. Meanwhile, the stranger moved in his bed. The Italian looked earnestly at Madame Servin, who then said to her, without her face undergoing the least change:

"Your copy is as beautiful as the original. If I had to choose, I should be very much perplexed."

"Monsieur Servin has not trusted this mystery to his wife," thought Ginevra, who, after answering the young woman by a gentle smile of incredulity, hummed a *canzonetta* from her own country to cover any noise that the prisoner might make.

It was so unusual to hear the studious Italian singing, that all the young girls, astonished, looked at her. Later on, this circumstance served as a proof to the charitable suppositions of hatred. Madame Servin soon left, and the session closed without any further incident. Ginevra let her companions go, and seemed to wish to continue working for a long time yet; but she unconsciously betrayed her desire to remain alone, for, whilst the pupils were preparing to go, she cast them ill-disguised looks of impatience. Mademoiselle Thirion, become in a few hours a cruel enemy to her who excelled her in everything, guessed by some instinct of hatred that her rival's pretended application was concealing a mystery. She had been struck more than once by the attentive air with which Ginevra had set herself to listen to a noise which nobody else heard. The expression she had in the last place surprised in the Italian's eyes was a flash of light to her. She was the last

of the pupils to leave, and she went down to Madame Servin, with whom she talked for a moment; then pretending to have forgotten her bag, very gently went up again to the studio, and saw Ginevra perched upon a hastily erected scaffolding, so deeply lost in contemplation of the military stranger, that she did not hear the light sound of her companion's footstep. It is true that, according to an expression of Walter Scott's, Amélie was treading as if on eggs; she quickly regained her studio door and coughed. Ginevra started, turned her head, saw her enemy, reddened, hastened to unfasten the serge to throw her off the scent, and got down after having tidied her color box. She left the studio carrying away engraved in her memory the image of a man's head, as graceful as that of Endymion, a masterpiece of Girodet that she had copied a few days before.

"Proscribing so young a man! Who can he be? for it is not Marshal Ney."

These sentences are the most simple expression of all the ideas that Ginevra uttered for two days. The third day, in spite of her care to be the first at the studio, she found Mademoiselle Thirion, who had driven there. Ginevra and her enemy observed each other a long time; but they assumed impenetrable faces toward each other. Amélie had seen the stranger's charming head; but, both happily and unhappily, the eagles of the uniform were not placed in the space that she could see through the chink. She was then lost in conjecture. All of a sudden Servin arrived, much earlier than usual.

"Mademoiselle Ginevra," he said, after having glanced round the studio, "why are you sitting there? The light is bad. Come nearer to these young ladies, and pull down your curtain a little."

Then he seated himself beside Laure, whose work earned his most kindly corrections.

"Yes, indeed," he cried, "here is a beautifully done head! You will be a second Ginevra."

The master went from easel to easel, scolding, flattering, joking, and as always, causing more terror by his jests than by his reprimands. The Italian had not obeyed the professor's observations, and remained at her post with the firm determination not to leave it. She took a sheet of paper and began to sketch the head of the poor recluse in sepia. A work conceived with passion always bears a peculiar stamp. The faculty of expressing the translations of nature or thought in true colors constitutes genius, and passion often supplies its place. Therefore, in Ginevra's case, the intuition she owed to her keenly roused imagination, or perhaps necessity, the mother of great things, lent her a supernatural talent. The officer's head was dashed upon the paper in the midst of an internal thrilling that she attributed to fear, and in which a physiologist would have recognized the fever of inspiration. From time to time she glanced furtively at her companions, in order to be able to hide the wash in case of any indiscretion on their part. In spite of her active watchfulness, there came a moment in which she did not perceive the eyeglass that her merciless

enemy was pointing at the mysterious drawing, whilst sheltering herself behind a big portfolio. Mademoiselle Thirion, recognizing the refugee's face, abruptly raised her head, and Ginevra drew the sheet of paper closer.

"Why did you stay here in spite of my advice, Mademoiselle?" the professor gravely asked Ginevra.

The pupil quickly turned her easel in such a way that no one could see her wash, and whilst showing it to her master, anxiously said:

"Do you not also think that this is a better light? ought I not to stay here?"

Servin turned pale. As nothing escapes the piercing eye of hatred, Mademoiselle Thirion made a third, so to speak, in the emotion which disturbed both master and pupil.

"You are right," said Servin, "but you will soon know more about it than I do," he added with a forced laugh.

There was a pause, during which the professor contemplated the officer's head.

"This is a masterpiece worthy of Salvator Rosa!" he cried with an artist's vehemence.

At this exclamation, all the young girls rose, and Mademoiselle Thirion ran up with the swiftness of a tiger who throws itself upon its prey. At this moment, the refugee, wakened by the noise, moved. Ginevra overturned her stool, uttered some rather incoherent sentences, and began to laugh; but she had folded the portrait and thrown it into her

portfolio before her formidable enemy was able to see it. The easel was surrounded; Servin loudly detailed the beauties of the copy that his favorite pupil was now making, and everyone was taken in by this stratagem, except Amélie, who, placing herself behind her companions, tried to open the portfolio in which she had seen the wash laid. Ginevra seized the portfolio and put it in front of her without a word. The two young girls then inspected each other in silence.

"Come, mesdemoiselles, to your places," said Servin, "if you wish to know as much as Mademoiselle di Piombo, you must not always talk about fashions or balls, and trifle as you do."

When all the young girls had returned to their easels, Servin seated himself by Ginevra.

"Was it not as well that this mystery should be discovered by me and not by another?" said the Italian in a low voice.

"Yes," answered the painter, "you are patriotic; but, even had you not been, I should still have confided it to you."

The master and pupil understood each other, and Ginevra was no longer afraid to ask:

"Who is it?"

"Labédoyère's intimate friend, the one who, next to the unfortunate colonel, contributed most for the union of the seventh with the grenadiers of the island of Elba. He was a major in the guard, and is just back from Waterloo."

"How is it you have not burnt his uniform, and

his shako, and given him bourgeois clothes?" asked Ginevra, eagerly.

"They are going to bring me some to-night."

"You ought to have shut up our studio for a few days."

"He is leaving."

"Then he wants to die?" said the young girl; "let him stay with you during the first stormy times. Paris is the only place in France where one can safely hide a man. He is a friend of yours?" she asked.

"No, he has no other claim upon my regard than that of his misfortune. This is how he came to fall into my hands: my father-in-law, who had returned to the service during this campaign, met this poor young man, and very cleverly saved him from the clutches of those who have arrested Labédoyère. He wanted to shelter him, the madman!"

"And you can call him that!" cried Ginevra, looking in surprise at the painter, who was silent for a moment.

"My father-in-law is too much spied upon to be able to keep anyone at his house," he replied, "so for the last week he has nightly brought him here. I had hoped to conceal him from all eyes by putting him in this corner, the only place in the house where he is in safety."

"If I can be of any use to you, employ me," said Ginevra, "I know the Maréchal de Feltre."

"Well, we shall see," answered the painter.

This conversation lasted too long to escape the

M. SERVIN'S STUDIO

When the painter and Ginevra believed themselves alone, he knocked in a certain way at the attic door, which at once turned upon its rusty, noisy hinges. The Italian saw a young man appear, tall and well-made, whose imperial uniform made her heart beat. The officer's arm was in a sling.

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notice of all the young girls. Servin left Ginevra, returned once more to each easel, and gave such a long lesson, that he was still on the staircase when the hour at which his pupils usually left, sounded.

"You are forgetting your bag, Mademoiselle Thirion," cried the professor, running after the young girl, who was stooping to the work of a spy to gratify her hatred.

The inquisitive pupil came to fetch her bag whilst showing some surprise at her own carelessness, but Servin's attention was an additional proof to her of the existence of an undoubtedly serious mystery; she had already imagined all that must exist, and could say like the Abbé Vertol: *"My siege is laid."* She noisily clattered down the stairs and violently shut the door leading to Servin's apartment, in order to give the belief that she had gone out; but she softly reascended, and stood behind the studio door. When the painter and Ginevra believed themselves alone, he knocked in a certain way at the attic door, which at once turned upon its rusty, noisy hinges. The Italian saw a young man appear, tall and well-made, whose imperial uniform made her heart beat. The officer's arm was in a sling, and the pallor of his complexion implied keen sufferings. Seeing a stranger, he started.

Amélie, who could see nothing, was afraid to remain any longer; but the creaking of the door being sufficient for her, she went away noiselessly.

"Do not be afraid," said the painter to the officer, "mademoiselle is the daughter of the

Emperor's most faithful friend, the Baron de Piombo."

The young soldier had no further doubt about Ginevra's patriotism, after having seen her.

"Are you wounded?" she said.

"Oh! it is nothing, mademoiselle, the wound is closing."

At this moment, the shrill, piercing voices of the newsboys reached the studio: "Here is the sentence of death—" All three started. The soldier was the first to hear the name which made him turn pale.

"Labédoyère!" he said, sinking on to the stool. They looked at each other in silence. Drops of perspiration gathered on the young man's livid forehead; with a gesture of despair he clutched his dark clusters of hair, and leant his elbow on the edge of Ginevra's easel.

"After all," he said, abruptly rising, "Labédoyère and I knew what we were doing. We knew what fate to expect after triumph as after failure. He dies for his cause, and I hide—"

He was hurrying toward the studio door; but, swifter still, Ginevra had sprung forward and barred the way.

"Will that re-establish the Emperor?" she said. "Do you think you can raise this giant when he himself did not know how to stand?"

"What do you imagine is to become of me?" then said the refugee, addressing the two friends that chance had sent him, "I have not a single relation in the world. Labédoyère was my protector

and friend, I am alone; to-morrow I may perhaps be banished or condemned. I have never had any more income than my pay, I have spent my last penny in coming to save Labédoyère from his fate and in trying to take him away; so death is a necessity for me. When one has made up his mind to die, he must know how to sell his head to the executioner. I was thinking just now that the life of one honest man was well worth that of two traitors, and that a well-placed stroke of a dagger might give immortality."

This paroxysm of despair frightened the painter and Ginevra herself, though she thoroughly understood the young man. The Italian admired the handsome head and delicious voice whose sweetness was hardly changed by the accents of frenzy; then she suddenly threw balm upon all the wounds of the unfortunate man:

"Monsieur," she said, "as to your pecuniary distress, let me offer you gold from my savings. My father is rich, I am his only child, he loves me, and I am quite sure he would not blame me. Do not scruple to accept it: our blessings come from the Emperor, and we have not a farthing that is not the result of his munificence. Would it not be only grateful to oblige one of his faithful soldiers? So take this sum with as little ceremony as I offer it to you. It is only money," she added in a scornful tone. "Now, as to friends, you will find some!"

At that, she proudly raised her head, and her eyes shone with unwonted lustre.

"The head that will fall to-morrow before a dozen rifles saves yours," she resumed. "Wait until the storm is over, and you can go and seek service abroad if they do not forget you; or in the French army if they do forget you."

In the consolation given by a woman there always exists something motherly, shrewd and complete. But, when to these words of peace and hope are added graceful gestures, that eloquence of tone that comes from the heart, and above all when the benefactress is beautiful, it is difficult for a young man to resist. The refugee inhaled love in all his senses. A light pink color tinged his white cheeks, his eyes lost a little of the melancholy that dimmed them, and he said in a peculiar tone of voice:

"You are an angel of goodness! But Labédoyère," he added, "Labédoyère!"

At this cry, they all three looked at each other in silence, and understood each other. They were no longer friends of twenty minutes, but twenty years.

"My dear fellow," replied Servin, "can you save him?"

"I can avenge him."

Ginevra started; although the stranger was handsome, his appearance had in no way moved the young girl; the gentle pity that women find in their hearts for miseries that have nothing ignoble about them, had stifled all other feelings in Ginevra; but to hear a cry of vengeance, to meet in this refugee an Italian spirit, devotion for Napoléon, Corsican generosity!—It was too much for her; she then

contemplated the officer with a reverential emotion which deeply disturbed her heart. It was the first time any man had caused her so keen a sensation. Like all women, she delighted in placing the stranger's soul on a level with the distinguished beauty of his features, and with the happy proportions of his figure which, as an artist, she admired. Led by chance from curiosity to pity, from pity to a powerful interest, from that interest she arrived at such deep feelings that she thought it dangerous to remain there any longer.

"Good-bye until to-morrow," she said, leaving the officer the sweetest of her smiles as consolation. Seeing this smile, which threw a new light upon Ginevra's face, the stranger forgot all for a moment.

"To-morrow," he replied sadly, "to-morrow, Labédoyère—"

Ginevra turned, put her finger upon her lips, and looked at him as if to say, "Calm yourself; be prudent."

Then the young man cried:

"O Dio! che non vorrei vivere dopo averla veduta!—O God! who would not wish to live after having seen her!"

The peculiar accent with which he uttered these words made Ginevra thrill.

"You are Corsican?" she cried, coming back to him, her heart beating joyfully.

"I was born in Corsica," he replied; "but I was taken to Genoa when very young; and, as soon as I reached the age for military service, I enlisted."

The stranger's beauty, the extraordinary charm that his attachment to the Emperor lent him, his wound, his misfortune, even his danger faded from Ginevra's eyes, or rather all were merged into a single new, delicious feeling. This refugee was a child of Corsica, he spoke the beloved language! For a moment the young girl remained motionless, held by a magic sensation; before her eyes was a living picture vividly colored by combined human feeling and accident; at Servin's bidding, the officer had seated himself on a divan, the painter had loosened the sling which held his guest's arm, and he was busily undoing the bandage in order to dress the wound. Ginevra shivered at sight of the long, deep sore made by a sword blade on the young man's fore-arm, and a groan burst from her. The stranger lifted his head toward her and began to smile. There was something touching and which went to the heart in the care with which Servin was taking off the bandage and feeling the bruised flesh; whilst the wounded man's face, although pale and sickly, expressed at sight of the young girl, more pleasure than suffering. An artist would have involuntarily admired this antithesis of feelings, and the contrasts produced by the whiteness of the linen, the nakedness of the arm, against the officer's blue and red uniform. At this moment, a dusky twilight enshrouded the studio; but a last ray of sunlight lit up the spot where the refugee was sitting, so that his pale, noble face, black hair, and his garments, were flooded with light. The superstitious

Italian took this simple effect for a happy omen. Thus the stranger resembled a heavenly messenger who spoke her native tongue to her, who placed her under the spell of her childhood's memories, whilst in her heart was growing a feeling as sweet and pure as her early infancy. For a brief moment, she stood dreaming and as if sunk in infinite thought; then she blushed at showing her preoccupation, exchanged a gentle, swift look with the refugee, and ran away seeing him always before her eyes.

*

The next day, as there was no class, Ginevra came to the studio, and the prisoner was able to stay by his compatriot; Servin, who had a sketch to finish, allowed the recluse to remain there whilst acting as mentor to the two young people, who often conversed in Corsican. The poor soldier related his sufferings during the defeat at Moscow, for he found himself, at nineteen, at the passage of the Bérésina, the only one of his regiment after having lost amongst his comrades the only men who could interest themselves in an orphan. With fiery touch he depicted the great disaster of Waterloo. His voice was music to the Italian. Brought up in Corsican ways, Ginevra was in some degree a child of nature, she was unacquainted with falsehood and yielded herself unreservedly to her impressions; she acknowledged them, or rather, allowed them to be guessed without any exercise of the petty, calculating coquetry of the young girls of Paris. During this day, she stopped more than once, her palette in one hand, her brush in the other, without moistening it with the colors on the palette; with eyes fastened on the officer and with slightly parted lips, she listened, always in readiness to make a stroke of the brush which she never made. She did not wonder at finding so much sweetness in the young man's eyes, for she felt her own growing

soft in spite of her determination to keep them severe and calm. Then, after that, she would paint with particular application for hours together, without raising her head, because he was there, beside her, watching her at work. The first time that he came to sit near to look at her in silence, she said to him in a voice of emotion, after a long pause:

"Then it amuses you to see me painting?"

That day, she learnt that his name was Luigi. Before separating, they agreed that on studio days, if any important political event had happened, Ginevra should inform of it by singing in a low voice certain Italian airs.

The next day, Mademoiselle Thirion secretly told all her companions that Ginevra di Piombo was loved by a young man who came, during lesson hours, and settled himself in the dark closet in the studio.

"You, who take her part," she said to Mademoiselle Roguin, "watch her well, and you will see how she spends her time."

Accordingly, Ginevra was then observed with diabolical attention. They listened to her songs, and watched her looks. Just when she thought nobody saw her, a dozen eyes were immediately fixed upon her. Thus forewarned, these young girls interpreted aright the agitations flitting across the Italian's brilliant face, her actions, the peculiar tone of her humming, and the intentness of the look with which they saw her listening to the indistinct sounds which she alone could hear through the partition.

At the end of a week, only one of Servin's fifteen pupils, Laure, had resisted her inclination to examine Louis through the chink in the partition; and by an instinct of weakness, she still defended the beautiful Corsican; Mademoiselle Roguin wanted to make her stay on the stairs at the hour for leaving in order to prove to her the intimacy between Ginevra and the handsome young man by surprising them together; but she refused to stoop to an espionage that curiosity could not justify, and she became an object of universal disapproval. Very soon the daughter of the usher in the king's cabinet found it inconvenient to attend the studio of a painter whose opinions were tinged by patriotism or Bonapartism, which, at that time, seemed to be one and the same thing; so she came no more to Servin's. If Amélie forgot Ginevra, the evil she had sown bore its fruits. Gradually, through accident, chattering or prudishness, all the other young students told their mothers of the strange intrigue going on at the studio. One day, Mathilde Roguin did not come; the next lesson, it was another young girl; finally three or four young ladies, who had remained to the last, came no more. Ginevra and her little friend Mademoiselle Laure, were for two or three days the only occupants of the deserted studio. The Italian did not notice her desertion, and did not even enquire into the reasons for her companions' absence. Since she had invented means of communicating with Louis, she lived at the studio as if in a delicious retreat, alone in the midst of the

world, thinking only of the officer and the dangers which threatened him. This young girl, although a sincere admirer of those noble characters who refuse to betray their political faith, pressed Louis to promptly submit to the royal authority, in order to keep him in France, and Louis would not submit so as to remain in his hiding-place.

If passions only spring and grow under the influence of romantic causes, never were there so many circumstances conspiring to unite two beings by the same feeling. Ginevra's friendship for Louis and Louis's for her thus made more progress in one month than society friendship would have made in ten years in a drawing-room. Is not adversity the touchstone of character? Ginevra was therefore easily able to know and appreciate Louis and they soon felt a mutual esteem for one another. Older than Louis, Ginevra found a certain sweetness in being courted by a young man who was already so great, so tried by fate, and in whom a man's experience was combined with the gifts of youth. On his side, Louis felt unutterable pleasure in allowing a young girl of twenty-five to apparently protect him. Was it not a proof of love? The union of gentleness and pride, of strength and weakness was an irresistible attraction in Ginevra; so Louis was completely subjugated by her. In short, they already loved each other so deeply, that they did not need to deny or confess it to themselves.

One day, towards evening, Ginevra heard the signal agreed upon; Louis was tapping upon the

woodwork with a pin in such a way as to produce no more noise than a spider spinning its web, and thus asked if he might come out of his retreat. She cast a look round the studio, did not see little Laure, and answered the signal; but, on opening the door, Louis perceived the pupil, and retired hastily. Surprised, Ginevra looked round, saw Laure, and said to her whilst going to her easel:

"You stay very late, dear. And yet this head seems to me finished, there is only one reflection to indicate on the top of this lock of hair."

"You would be very good," said Laure in a voice of emotion, "if you would correct this copy for me, I could then keep something of yours—"

"I will gladly," resumed Ginevra, feeling sure in this way of being able to send her away. "I thought," she answered, giving light touches with the brush, "that your home was a long way from the studio?"

"Oh! Ginevra, I am going, and for ever," cried the young girl, with a sad face.

"You are leaving Monsieur Servin?" asked the Italian, without seeming as much affected by these words as she would have been a month before.

"Have you not noticed then, Ginevra, that for some time, you and I are the only ones here?"

"That's true," answered Ginevra, as if suddenly struck by some recollection, "are the young ladies ill, married, or are their fathers all serving at the Castle?"

"They have all left Monsieur Servin," replied Laure.

"And why?"

"Because of you, Ginevra."

"Of me!" repeated the Corsican girl rising, with lowering brow, a fierce look and flashing eyes.

"Oh! do not be angry, dear Ginevra," mournfully cried Laure. "But my mother too wishes me to leave the studio. All the young ladies said that you were carrying on an intrigue, that Monsieur Servin allowed a young man who loved you to remain in the dark closet; I have never believed these slanders and have said nothing to my mother. Yesterday evening, Madame Roguin met my mother at a ball and asked her if she still sent me here. On my mother replying in the affirmative she repeated these young ladies' stories. Mama gave me a good scolding, she declared that I must know of all this, that, in not speaking of it to her I was wanting in the confidence existing between mother and daughter. Oh! dear Ginevra! I, who have looked upon you as my model, how sorry I am not to be able to remain your companion—."

"We shall meet again in life; young girls marry—," said Ginevra.

"When they are rich," replied Laure.

"Come and see me, my father is wealthy."

"Ginevra," rejoined Laure tenderly, "Madame Roguin and my mother are coming to-morrow to reproach Monsieur Servin; at least, let him be warned."

Had a thunderbolt fallen in front of Ginevra she could not have been more astonished at this disclosure.

"What did it matter to them?" she said naïvely.

"Everyone thinks it is very wrong. Mama says it is against morality—"

"And you, Laure, what do you think of it?"

The young girl looked at Ginevra, their thoughts mingled, Laure no longer controlled her tears, threw her arms round her friend's neck and kissed her. At this moment, Servin arrived.

"Mademoiselle Ginevra," he said enthusiastically, "I have finished my picture, it is being varnished— What is the matter with you? It seems that all these young ladies are taking holidays, or are in the country?"

Laure dried her tears, bowed to Servin and withdrew.

"The studio has been deserted for several days," said Ginevra, "and the girls are not coming back."

"Bah ?"—

"Oh! you need not laugh," replied Ginevra, "listen: I am the involuntary cause of the loss of your reputation."

The artist began to smile, and said, interrupting his pupil:

"My reputation? But—in a few days—my picture will be exhibited."

"It is no question of your talent," said the Italian, "it concerns your morality. These girls have given out that Louis is shut up here, that you countenanced—our love—"

"There is some truth in that, mademoiselle," replied the professor. "The mothers of these girls

are prudes," he resumed. "Had they come to see me, all might have been explained. But why should I care for all that? Life is too short!"

And the painter snapped his fingers above his head.

Louis, who had heard part of this conversation, hastened up directly.

"You will lose all your pupils," he cried, "and I shall have ruined you!"

The artist took Louis's and Ginevra's hands, and joined them.

"You will marry, children?" he asked with touching kindness.

They both lowered their eyes, and their silence was the first avowal they made to each other.

"Well," resumed Servin, "you will be happy, will you not? Can anything pay for the happiness of two such beings?"

"I am rich," said Ginevra, "and you will allow me to indemnify you—"

"Indemnify!—"cried Servin, "when it becomes known that I was the victim of the slanders of two or three silly women, and that I was hiding a refugee: why, all the Liberals in Paris will send me their daughters! I may then be your debtor—"

Louis squeezed his protector's hand, unable to utter a word; but he finally said in a voice of emotion:

"Then I shall owe all my happiness to you!"

"Be happy, I join you together," said the painter with comical unction, as he laid his hands upon the heads of the two lovers.

This artistical joke put an end to their emotion. All three looked at one another laughing.

The Italian grasped Louis tightly by the hand with a simplicity of action worthy the customs of her native country.

"Ah! my dear children," resumed Servin, "you think now that all goes beautifully. Well, you are mistaken."

The two lovers gazed at each other in astonishment.

"Don't be afraid, I am the only one embarrassed by your tricks! Madame Servin is a little strait-laced, and, to tell you the truth, I do not know how we are going to settle it with her."

"Good gracious! I was forgetting!" cried Ginevra. "To-morrow, Madame Roguin and Laure's mother are to come and—"

"So I hear," said the painter, interrupting her.

"But you can justify yourself," replied the young girl with a proud toss of the head. "Monsieur Louis," she said turning towards him and looking at him slyly, "ought to feel no more antipathy for the royal government?—Well," she resumed after seeing him smile, "to-morrow morning I shall send a petition to one of the most influential persons in the War Office, to a man who can refuse nothing to the daughter of the Baron de Piombo. We will obtain a tacit pardon for Commander Louis, for *they* would not recognize your rank as major.—And you," she added, addressing Servin, "can confound the mothers of my charitable companions by telling them the truth."

"You are an angel!" cried Servin.

Whilst this scene was taking place at the studio, Ginevra's father and mother were growing impatient at her non-arrival.

"It is six o'clock, and Ginevra is not back yet," cried Bartolomeo.

"She has never come in so late," replied Piombo's wife.

The two old people looked at each other with all the signs of unusual anxiety. Too much perturbed to remain in his place, Bartolomeo rose, and for a man of seventy-seven, walked twice round his salon actively enough. Thanks to his robust constitution, he had undergone little change since the day of his arrival in Paris, and, in spite of his height, was still upright. His hair, grown white and thin, left bare a large protuberant skull which gave a great idea of his character and decision. His face, scored with deep wrinkles, had developed tremendously, and retained that pallor which compels veneration.

The vehemence of passion still prevailed in the supernatural gleam of his eyes, the brows of which had not entirely whitened and still preserved their terrible mobility. The appearance of this head was severe, but one could see that Bartolomeo had the right to be so. Only his wife and child knew his kindness and gentleness. On duty or before strangers, he never laid aside the stateliness that age had imparted to his person, and the habit of knitting his heavy eyebrows, of contracting the wrinkles in his face, of investing his glance with

Napoléonic fixity, gave frigidity to his manner. During the course of his political life, he had been so universally feared, that he passed as unsociable; but it is not difficult to account for this reputation. Piombo's life, morality and fidelity were a reproach to most of the courtiers. In spite of the delicate missions entrusted to his discretion, and which for any other man would have been lucrative, he did not possess more than thirty thousand francs income from the Funds. If one thinks of the cheapness of the public securities under the Empire, of Napoléon's liberality to those of his faithful servants who knew how to speak, it is easy to see that the Baron de Piombo was a man of strict honesty; he only owed his plumage of baron to the necessity Napoléon was under of giving him a title in sending him to a foreign Court. Bartolomeo had always professed implacable hatred for the traitors with which Napoléon surrounded himself in the belief that he could win them by means of victories. It was he, they said, who took three steps toward the Emperor's closet door, after having advised him to get rid of three men in France, the eve of the day on which he left upon his famous and wonderful campaign of 1814. Since the second return of the Bourbons, Bartolomeo no longer wore the decoration of the Legion of Honor. Never did any man present a more beautiful picture of those old Republicans, incorruptible friends of the Empire, who remained like living ruins of the two most energetic governments that the world has ever known. If the Baron de

Piombo was disliked by some of the courtiers, he had friends in the Darus, the Drouots, the Carnots. So, as to the remainder of the politicians, after Waterloo, he cared about them as little as the whiffs of smoke he drew from his cigar.

By means of the somewhat small sum that Madame, the Emperor's mother, had given him for his property in Corsica, Bartolomeo di Piombo had acquired the old mansion of Portenduère, to which he made no alteration. Almost always lodged at the expense of the government, he had only lived in this house since the catastrophe at Fontainebleau. According to the habit of simple and highly virtuous people, the baron and his wife set no value on outside show; their furniture came from the old furnishings in the house. The great high-storied rooms, dark and bare, of this residence, the large mirrors set in old, almost black, gilt frames, and the Louis XIVth. furniture, were in keeping with Bartolomeo and his wife, both persons worthy of antiquity. Under the Empire and during the Hundred Days, whilst exercising functions that were richly remunerated, the old Corsican had had a large household, rather with the object of doing credit to his position than with the design of making himself conspicuous. His life and that of his wife were so frugal, and so quiet, that their modest fortune sufficed for their needs. To them, their daughter Ginevra was worth all the riches in the world. So, when, in May, 1814, the Baron de Piombo left his post, dismissed his suite and closed his stable-door, Ginevra, as simple

and unostentatious as her parents, had not a single regret; following the example of great minds, she luxuriated only in the strength of her feelings, as she founded her happiness on solitude and work. Then these three beings loved each other too much for the exteriors of existence to have any value in their eyes. Often, and especially since Napoléon's second and terrible downfall, Bartolomeo and his wife would spend delicious evenings listening to Ginevra playing or singing. Their daughter's presence, or least word, gave them an immense secret pleasure; their eyes followed her with tender anxiety, they heard her step in the yard, however light it might be. Like lovers, they all three knew how to remain silent for hours together, in this way hearing the eloquence of their souls much better than by words. This deep feeling, which was life itself to the two old people, animated all their thoughts. There were not three existences, but one alone, which, like a flame on the hearth, divided itself into three tongues of fire. If sometimes the memory of Napoléon's kindnesses and misfortune, or the politics of the moment, triumphed over the constant solicitude of the two old people, they could talk of them without breaking the community of their thoughts: for did not Ginevra share in their political passions? What more natural than the ardor with which they fled to the heart of their only child? Up till then, the Baron de Piombo had been absorbed in occupations of a public life; but, in giving up his employment, the Corsican had to

throw his energy into the last sentiment remaining to him; then, apart from the ties which unite a father and mother to their daughter, there was perhaps, unknown to these three despotic souls, a powerful reason for the fanaticism of their mutual passion; they loved each other equally, Ginevra's whole heart belonged to her father, as did Piombo's to her; in short, if it be true that we cling to each other through our faults rather than through our qualities, then Ginevra responded marvelously to all her father's passions. From this proceeded the only imperfection in this triple life. Ginevra was headstrong in will, vindictive and hasty as Bartolomeo had been in his youth. The Corsican delighted in developing these savage feelings in his daughter's heart, just as a lion teaches its cubs to pounce upon their prey. But as this apprenticeship of vengeance, in some degree, could only be gone through at the paternal home, Ginevra forgave her father nothing, and he was obliged to yield to her. Piombo looked upon these mimic quarrels as mere child's play; but the child contracted the habit of ruling her parents. In the middle of these storms that Bartolomeo loved to excite, one tender word, one look, was enough to calm their wrathful souls, and they were never so near a kiss as when they threatened each other. And yet, for about five years, Ginevra, grown wiser than her father, constantly avoided this sort of scene. Her faithfulness and devotion and the love that triumphed over all her thoughts, and her admirable good sense had overcome her fits of rage; but there

had resulted none the less a great evil; Ginevra lived with her father and mother on a footing of equality which is always fatal. To complete the account of all the changes that had befallen these three persons since their arrival in Paris, Piombo and his wife, both uneducated people, had allowed Ginevra to study according to her fancy. Following her youthful whims, she had learned everything and dropped everything, taking up and leaving each idea in turn, until painting became her ruling passion; she would have been perfect, had her mother been capable of directing her studies, enlightening her and harmonizing the gifts of nature: her faults arose from the fatal education that the old Corsican had delighted in giving her.

After treading the creaking boards under foot for a long time, the old man rang; a servant appeared.

"Go and meet Mademoiselle Ginevra," he said.

"I have always regretted that we no longer had a carriage for her," observed the baroness.

"She would not have one," replied Piombo, looking at his wife, who, inured for forty years to her rôle of submission, lowered her eyes.

Already seventy, tall, withered, pale and wrinkled, the baroness was exactly like those old women that Schnetz puts in the Italian scenes in his genre paintings; she was habitually so silent, that one might have taken her for another Madame Shandy; but a word, a look, a gesture would betray that her feelings had preserved the vigor and freshness of youth. Her toilette, devoid of coquetry, was often

lacking in taste. She usually remained passive, sunk in an easy-chair, like a Sultana Validé, either waiting for or admiring Ginevra, her pride and her life. It seemed as if her daughter's beauty, toilette and grace had become her own. All was well with her when Ginevra was happy. Her hair had grown white, and several locks could be seen above her pale, wrinkled forehead, or along her hollow cheeks.

"It is about a fortnight," she said, "since Ginevra has returned a little later."

"Jean will not go fast enough," cried the impatient old man, who folded the skirts of his blue coat, seized his hat, crammed it on his head, took his cane and went off.

"You will not go far," cried his wife.

In fact, the gate had opened and shut, and the old mother heard Ginevra's step in the yard. Bartolomeo suddenly reappeared carrying his daughter in triumph, struggling in his arms.

"Here she is, la Ginevra, la Ginevrettina, la Ginevrina, la Ginevrola, la Ginevretta, la Ginevra bella!"

"Father, you are hurting me!"

Ginevra was at once set down with a sort of respect. She nodded her head pleasantly to her mother, who was already startled, as if to say to her, "It is only pretence."

The color and a kind of gaiety then returned to the baroness's wan, pale face.

Piombo then rubbed his hands with extreme

energy, a sure sign of gladness; he had acquired this habit at Court from seeing Napoléon in a rage with those of his generals or ministers who served him badly or had committed some fault. Once the muscles of his face were relaxed, the slightest wrinkle on his forehead bespoke benevolence. At this moment these two old people exactly resembled suffering plants to whom a little water restores life after a long drought.

"Come to dinner!" cried the baron holding out his great hand to Ginevra, whom he called Signora Piombellina, another symptom of cheerfulness that his daughter answered with a smile.

"I say," said Piombo, as they left the table, "do you know that your mother has remarked to me, that, for a month, you stay much longer than usual at the studio? It seems that painting comes before us."

"Oh! father—"

"Doubtless Ginevra is preparing some surprise for us," said the mother.

"You are going to bring me a picture of your own?" cried the Corsican, clapping his hands.

"Yes, I am very busy at the studio," she replied.

"What is the matter, Ginevra? you are growing pale!" said her mother.

"No," cried the young girl, a gesture of resolution escaping her, "no! it shall not be said that Ginevra Piombo ever lied in her life!"

Hearing this singular exclamation, Piombo and his wife looked at their daughter with astonishment.

"I love a young man," she added with emotion.

Then, not daring to look at her parents, she drooped her large lids, as if to veil the fire in her eyes.

"Is he a prince?" asked her father ironically in a tone of voice that made the mother and daughter tremble.

"No, father," she answered modestly, "he is a penniless young man—"

"Then he is very handsome?"

"He is unfortunate."

"What does he do?"

"He is Labédoyère's companion; he was outlawed, without shelter, Servin hid him, and—"

"Servin is an honest fellow who has behaved well," cried Piombo, "but you do wrong, my child, to love another that your father—"

"It is not in my power not to love," gently replied Ginevra.

"I flattered myself," resumed her father, "that my Ginevra would be faithful to me until death, that she would have received no attentions but mine and her mother's, that our tenderness would have encountered no rival tenderness in her heart, and that—"

"Have I ever reproached you for your fanaticism over Napoléon?" said Ginevra. "Am I the only person you have loved? have you not been sent on embassies for months at a time? have I not bravely endured your absences? Life has necessities that one must learn to submit to."

"Ginevra!"

"No, you do not love me for myself, and your reproaches betray unbearable egotism."

"You complain of your father's love!" cried Piombo with flaming eyes.

"Father, I will never accuse you," replied Ginevra, more gently than her trembling mother expected, "you have grounds for your egotism, as I have grounds for my love. Heaven is my witness, that never has a daughter better fulfilled her duty towards her parents. I have never found anything but happiness and love in what others often consider as an obligation. For fifteen years I have not turned aside from your protecting wing, and it has been a very sweet pleasure for me to brighten your days. But should I be ungrateful in yielding myself to the charm of loving, in wishing for a husband to protect me after you are gone?"

"Ah! you are calculating with your father, Ginevra," rejoined the old man in a sinister tone.

There was a terrifying pause during which no one dared speak. At last Bartolomeo broke the silence by crying in a heart-rending voice:

"Oh! stay with us, stay by your old father: I could not bear to see you loving a man. Ginevra, you will not have long to wait for your liberty—"

"But, father, think, that we will not leave you, that there will be two to love you, that you will know the man to whose care you will leave me! You will be doubly loved, by me and him; by him who is yet me, and by me who am entirely himself."

"Oh! Ginevra! Ginevra!" cried the Corsican, clenching his fists, "why did you not marry when Napoléon had accustomed me to the idea, and when he offered you dukes and counts?"

"They loved me to order," said the young girl, "besides, I did not wish to leave you, and they would have taken me away with them."

"You do not wish to leave us alone," said Piombo, "but to marry, is to separate us! I know you, child, you would not love us any more."

"Elisa," he added, looking at his wife, who remained motionless and as if in a stupor, "we no longer have a daughter, she wants to marry."

The old man sat down after raising his hands in the air as if to invoke God, then he remained bowed down as if overwhelmed beneath his sorrow. Ginevra saw her father's agitation and the moderation of his anger broke her heart; she had expected a crisis, a frenzy; she had not armed herself against the paternal gentleness.

"Father," she said in a touching voice, "no, you shall never be forsaken by your Ginevra. But love her also a little for herself. If you only knew how *he* loves me! Ah! he would not cause me any pain!"

"Comparisons already," cried Piombo, in terrible accents. "No! I cannot bear this idea," he resumed. "If he loved you as you deserve to be loved, he would kill me; and, if he did not love you, I should stab him."

Piombo's hands shook, his lips and body trembled

and his eyes flashed lightning; Ginevra could alone endure his glance, for then her eyes kindled, and the daughter was worthy of the father.

"Oh! to love you! What man on earth is worthy of it?" he resumed. "To love you as a father, is it not already living in Paradise? Who then is worthy of being your husband?"

"He is," said Ginevra, "he of whom I feel myself so unworthy."

"He?" mechanically repeated Piombo, "who? he?"

"The man I love."

"Can he yet know you well enough to adore you?"

"But, father," replied Ginevra, feeling an impulse of impatience, "even if he does not love me, as soon as I love him—"

"You love him then?" cried Piombo.

Ginevra gently nodded her head.

"Then you love him more than you love us?"

"These two feelings cannot be compared," she replied.

"One is stronger than the other?" rejoined Piombo.

"I think so," said Ginevra.

"You will not marry him!" cried the Corsican, in a voice that made the window panes ring.

"I shall marry him," quietly replied Ginevra.

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" cried the mother, "how is this quarrel to end? Holy Virgin, come between them!"

The baron, who was striding up and down, came and sat down; an icy sternness darkened his face, he looked fixedly at his daughter, and said in a gentle, weak voice:

"Well, Ginevra! no, you will not marry him. Oh! do not say 'yes' to-night—let me believe the contrary. Do you want to see your father kneeling and his white hairs prostrated before you? I will implore you—"

"Ginevra Piombo has not been accustomed to make a promise and not keep it," she replied. "I am your daughter."

"She is right," said the baroness; "we are brought into the world to marry."

"So, you encourage her in her disobedience," said the baron to his wife, who, struck by this word, became a statue.

"It is not disobeying to refuse to comply with an unjust order," replied Ginevra.

"It cannot be unjust when it emanates from your father's mouth, my child! Why do you judge me? Is not the reluctance I feel a warning from on high? I am perhaps preserving you from some misfortune."

"The misfortune would be if he did not love me!"

"Always him!"

"Yes, always," she rejoined; "he is my life, my blessing, my thought. Even in obeying you, he would always be in my heart. To forbid me to marry him, is it not to make me hate you?"

"You do not love us any more!" cried Piombo.

"Oh!" said Ginevra, shaking her head.

"Well then! forget him, remain faithful to us. After us—you understand."

"Father, do you want me to wish for your death?" cried Ginevra.

"I shall live longer than you will! Children who do not honor their parents die soon," cried her father, reaching the last pitch of exasperation.

"All the more reason that I should marry at once and be happy," she said.

This composure, this power of reasoning, completed Piombo's disturbance, the blood rushed violently to his head and his face became purple. Ginevra shivered, she sprang like a bird on to her father's knees, threw her arms round his neck, stroked his hair, and cried, quite softened:

"Oh! yes! let me die the first! I shall not survive you, father, my good father!"

"Oh! my Ginevra, my foolish Ginevrina!" answered Piombo, whose anger melted under this caress like ice under the sun's rays.

"It was time that you both finished," said the baroness in a voice of emotion.

"Poor mother!"

"Ah! Ginevretta! ma Ginevra bella!"

And the father played with his daughter as if with a child of six, he amused himself by undoing the waving locks of her hair, by making her dance; there was something foolish in the expression of his tenderness. Very soon his daughter scolded him whilst kissing him, and tried, whilst joking, to obtain permission for her Louis's admission; but, though

joking too, the father refused. She pouted, came back and pouted again; then, at the end of the evening, she felt content with having engraved upon her father's heart both her love for Louis and the idea of an early marriage.

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The next day, she did not speak of her love, she went later to the studio, and returned early; she was more affectionate to her father than she had ever been, and showed herself full of gratitude, as if to thank him for the consent his silence seemed to give to her marriage. In the evening she played a long time, and would often cry: "This nocturne needs a man's voice!" She was Italian, which is saying all.

At the end of eight days, her mother made a sign to her; she came; then, whispering in her ear:

"I have persuaded your father to receive him," she said.

"Oh! mother! you make me very happy!"

Accordingly, that day, Ginevra had the happiness of returning to her father's house on Louis's arm. For the second time, the poor officer was coming out of his hiding-place. The active solicitations that Ginevra made to the Duc de Feltre, at that time Minister of War, had been crowned with complete success. Louis had just been reinstated on the list of unattached officers. It was a very great step toward a better future. Informed by his sweetheart of all the difficulties that awaited him with the baron, the young major did not dare confess the dread he had of not pleasing him. This man, so brave in adversity, so bold on the battle-field, trembled in

thinking of his entrance into the Piombos' drawing-room. Ginevra felt him thrilling, and this emotion, whose element was their happiness, was to her a fresh proof of love.

"How pale you are!" she said to him when they arrived at the door of the house.

"Oh! Ginevra! if it were only a matter of my life!"

Although Bartolomeo had been forewarned by his wife of the official presentation of the man Ginevra loved, he did not come forward to meet him, remained in the chair he usually sat in, and the severity of his forehead was icy.

"Father," said Ginevra, "I have brought some one whom you will no doubt be pleased to see; Monsieur Louis, a soldier who fought four feet from the Emperor at Mont Saint-Jean—"

The Baron de Piombo rose, cast a furtive look at Louis and said sardonically:

"Monsieur is not decorated?"

"I no longer wear the Legion of Honor," timidly answered Louis, who remained humbly standing.

Ginevra, hurt at her father's rudeness, brought forward a chair. The officer's answer satisfied Napoléon's old servant. Madame Piombo, seeing that her husband's eyebrows were resuming their natural position, said, in order to enliven conversation:

"The likeness between Monsieur and Nina Porta is very astonishing. Do you not think that monsieur has quite the physiognomy of the Portas?"

"Nothing is more natural," replied the young

man, upon whom Piombo's flaming eyes were fixed, "Nina was my sister—"

"You are Luigi Porta?" asked the old man.

"Yes—"

Bartolomeo rose, staggered, was obliged to lean on a chair, and looked at his wife. Elisa Piombo came to him; then the two old people, in silence, took each other's arms, and left the drawing-room, abandoning their daughter with a kind of horror. Luigi Porta, stupefied, looked at Ginevra, who became as pale as a marble statue, and remained with her eyes fixed upon the door by which her father and mother had disappeared; there was something so solemn in this silence and this retreat, that, perhaps for the first time, the feeling of fear entered her heart. She clasped her hands violently, and said, in so agitated a voice that only a lover could have heard her:

"What misery in a word!"

"In the name of our love, what have I said?" asked Luigi Porta.

"My father," she replied, "has never spoken to me about our wretched history, and I was too young when I left Corsica to know it."

"Were we in *vendetta?*" asked Luigi, trembling.

"Yes. Upon questioning my mother, I learnt that the Porta had killed my brothers and burnt our house. My father massacred all your family. How have you survived, you whom he believed he had fastened to a bedpost before setting fire to the house?"

"I do not know," replied Luigi. "At six years

of age I was taken to Genoa, to the home of an old man called Colonna. No details about my family were given me. I only knew that I was an orphan and penniless. This Colonna was a father to me, and I bore his name up to the day upon which I entered the service. As I needed deeds to prove who I was, the old Colonna then told me that, weak and still a child as I was, I had enemies. He induced me to take the name of Luigi only, so as to escape them."

"Go! Go! Luigi!" cried Ginevra, "but no, I ought to accompany you. Whilst you are in my father's house, you have nothing to fear; the moment you leave it, take care of yourself! you will go from danger to danger. My father has two Corsicans in his service, and, if he himself does not threaten your life, they will."

"Ginevra," he said, "is this hatred to exist between you and me?"

The young girl smiled sadly and hung her head. She soon lifted it with a sort of pride and said:

"Oh! Luigi! our feelings must be very pure and sincere to give me strength to walk in the path upon which I am to enter. But it is a question of a happiness that is to last for life, is it not?"

Luigi's only answer was a smile and he pressed Ginevra's hand.

The young girl understood that true love alone could just then disdain vulgar protestations. The calm, conscientious expression of Luigi's feelings foretold, in some degree, their strength and durance.

The destiny of these two lovers was then fulfilled. Ginevra foresaw that she would have to wage some cruel fights; but the idea of forsaking Louis, a thought which had perhaps drifted through her mind, completely vanished. His always, she suddenly dragged him with a sort of energy out of the house, and never left him until he reached the house in which Servin had rented him a modest lodging. When she returned to her father's, she had assumed that species of serenity which comes from a strong resolution; no alteration in her manners reflected anxiety. She looked up at her father and mother, whom she found about to sit down to table, with eyes that were guiltless of defiance and full of gentleness; she saw that her old mother had been crying and the redness of her wrinkled eyelids moved her heart for a moment; but she hid her emotion.

Piombo seemed to be a prey to a grief that was too violent and too repressed to be betrayed by ordinary expressions. The servants served the dinner, which nobody touched. A horror of food is one of the symptoms that denote the great crises of the soul. All three rose without having spoken a word to each other. When Ginevra was seated between her father and mother in their great, dark, solemn drawing-room, Piombo wanted to speak, but lost his voice; he tried to walk, but was too weak; he returned to his seat and rang the bell.

"Pietro," he said at last to a servant, "light the fire; I am cold."

Ginevra started and looked anxiously at her father. The struggle he was engaged in must have been horrible, his face was convulsed. Ginevra knew the extent of the peril which threatened her, but she did not quail; whilst the furtive glances that Bartolomeo cast at his daughter seemed to imply that, at this moment, he dreaded the temper whose violence was his own handiwork. Between them all must be extreme. Therefore, the certainty of the change that might take place in the feelings of father and daughter, animated the baroness's face with an expression of terror.

"Ginevra, you love the enemy of your family," said Piombo finally, not daring to look at his daughter.

"That is true," she replied.

"You must choose between him and us. Our *vendetta* is part of ourselves. Whoever does not espouse my vengeance does not belong to my family."

"My choice is made," replied Ginevra in a calm voice.

His daughter's quiet deceived Bartolomeo.

"Oh! my dear daughter!" cried the old man, his eyelids suffused with tears, the first and the last he shed in his life.

"I shall be his wife," said Ginevra hastily.

Bartolomeo became almost dizzy; but he recovered his composure and replied:

"This marriage will not take place during my lifetime, I will never consent to it."

Ginevra was silent.

"But," continued the baron, "do you not bear in mind that Luigi is the son of the man who killed your brother?"

"He was six years old when the crime was committed, he must be innocent of it," she answered.

"A Porta!" cried Bartolomeo.

"But have I ever been able to share in this hatred?" said the young girl eagerly, "did you bring me up in the belief that a Porta was a monster? Could I imagine that anyone remained of those you killed? Is it not natural that you should give up your *vendetta* to my feelings?"

"A Porta!" said Piombo. "Had his father formerly found you in your bed, you would not have lived, he would have killed you a hundred times over."

"That may be," she answered, "but his son has given me more than life. To see Luigi, is a happiness without which I could not live. Luigi has revealed the world of sentiment to me. I have perhaps seen handsomer faces than his, but none have charmed me so much; I have perhaps heard voices—no, no, never any that were sweeter. Luigi loves me, he shall be my husband."

"Never!" said Piombo, "I would rather see you in your coffin, Ginevra."

The old Corsican rose, began to stride hastily about the drawing-room, and burst out with these words, after pauses which reflected all his agitation:

"Perhaps you think you can bend my will?

Undeceive yourself; I will not have a Porta for my son-in-law. Such is my decision. Let there be no more question of it between us. I am Bartolomeo di Piombo, do you understand, Ginevra?"

"Do you attach some mysterious meaning to these words?" she asked coldly.

"They mean that I have a dagger, and that I do not fear the justice of men. We Corsicans, we go and account to God."

"Well," said the daughter rising, "I am Ginevra di Piombo, and I declare, that in six months, I shall be Luigi Porta's wife. You are a tyrant, father," she added, after a dreadful pause.

Bartolomeo clenched his fists and struck the marble chimney-piece.

"Ah! we are in Paris!" he murmured. He held his peace, folded his arms, hung his head on his chest and spoke not a single word the whole evening. After having expressed her will, the young girl affected an incredible composure; she sat down at the piano, sang, and played delicious pieces with a grace and feeling that denoted a perfect liberty of spirit, thus triumphing over her father, whose brow did not seem to soften. The old man cruelly felt this implied taunt, and at this moment gathered one of the bitter fruits of the education he had given his daughter. Respect is a barrier which protects a father and mother as well as the children, by sparing the former sorrow, and the latter remorse.

The next day, Ginevra, wishing to go out at the hour she usually went to the studio, found the door

of the house shut upon her; but she soon invented a means of informing Luigi of the paternal severity. A lady's maid, who could not read, brought the young officer the letter that Ginevra wrote to him. For five days, the two lovers were able to correspond, thanks to those artifices that one can always contrive at twenty years old.

The father and daughter rarely spoke. Both, in the bottom of their hearts, nursed a principle of hatred, they suffered, but proudly and in silence. Knowing the strength of the bonds of love that attached them to one another, they tried to snap them, without succeeding. No gentle thought came, as formerly, to gladden Bartolomeo's stern features when he looked at his Ginevra. The young girl had something fierce about her whenever she looked at her father, and reproach sat upon her innocent brow; she gave herself up a great deal to happy thoughts, but sometimes remorse seemed to dim her eyes. It was not even difficult to guess that she would never be able to calmly rejoice in a happiness that caused the sorrow of her parents.

With Bartolomeo, as with his daughter, all the irresolution produced by their natural goodness of heart was nevertheless bound to clash with their pride and the ill-will peculiar to Corsicans. They encouraged each other in their anger, and shut their eyes to the future. Perhaps they also flattered themselves that one would yield to the other.

On Ginevra's birthday, her mother, in despair at this breach, which was assuming a serious character,

meditated reconciling the father and daughter, by virtue of the memories of this anniversary. They were all three assembled in Bartolomeo's room. Ginevra guessed her mother's intention from the hesitation depicted on her face, and she smiled sadly.

Just then, a servant announced two public notaries, who entered, accompanied by several witnesses.

Bartolomeo looked fixedly at these men, whose coldly precise faces were somehow hurtful to souls as passionate as were those of the three principal actors in this scene. The old man turned towards his daughter in an anxious way, and saw on her face a triumphant smile which made him suspect some calamity; but, as savages do, he feigned a delusive apathy whilst looking at the two notaries with a kind of calm curiosity. The strangers sat down after having been invited to do so by a gesture from the old man.

"Monsieur is doubtless Monsieur le Baron de Piombo?" asked the elder of the notaries.

Bartolomeo bowed. The notary moved his head slightly, and looked at the young girl with the sly expression of a bailiff surprising a debtor; he drew out his snuff-box, opened it, took a pinch of snuff, and began to inhale it spasmodically whilst searching for the opening words of his discourse; then, whilst delivering it, he made continual pauses—an oratorical manœuvre that this mark — very imperfectly represents.

"Monsieur," said he, "I am Monsieur Roguin,

notary to mademoiselle your daughter, and we come—my colleague and I—to accomplish the will of the law and—put an end to the disagreement—which—it seems—has come between you and mademoiselle your daughter—on the subject—of—her—marriage with Monsieur Luigi Porta."

This sentence, rather pedantically delivered, probably seemed too fine to Maître Roguin to be understood all at once; he stopped and looked at Bartolomeo with an expression peculiar to men of business, and which is something between servility and familiarity.

By pretending to assume a great deal of concern for the people to whom they are talking, the faces of notaries finish by contracting into a grimace that they put on and take off like their official *pallium*. This mask of kindliness, the mechanism of which is so easily discerned, so irritated Bartolomeo, that he had to collect all his senses not to throw Monsieur Roguin out of the window; an angry expression crept into his wrinkles, and, seeing this, the notary said to himself:

"I am producing an effect.—But," he resumed, in horrid accents, "Monsieur le Baron, on occasions like this, our good offices always begin by being essentially conciliatory.—Deign therefore to have the goodness to listen to me.—It is undeniable that Mademoiselle Ginevra Piombo—attains upon this very day the age which permits to a young woman the right of claiming from her parents her independence in the matter of her marriage—in spite of their lack of consent. Now,—it is customary in families—

who—enjoy a certain esteem,—who belong to society,—who maintain some dignity,—to whom, in short, it is of importance to guard the secret of their dissensions from the public,—and who, besides, do not wish to injure themselves by blasting the future of the young married couple with their disapproval, —for it is injuring one's self,—it is customary,—I say,—amongst these honorable families—not to allow such processes to remain open,—that last, that—are monuments of a division that—ends—by ceasing.—The moment, monsieur, a young lady has recourse to legal process, she shows too determined a purpose for a father—and—a mother," he added, turning towards the baroness, "to hope to see her follow their advice.—Paternal resistance is then made void—by this deed—in the first place,—then being invalidated by the law, it is certain that any wise man, after having made a last remonstrance to his child, will give liberty to—"

Monsieur Roguin stopped, seeing that he might talk in this way for two hours without obtaining any reply, and he experienced, moreover, a peculiar emotion at the appearance of the man he was trying to convert. Bartolomeo's face had undergone an extraordinary revolution, all his contracted wrinkles gave him an air of indefinable cruelty, and the look he cast at the notary was like that of a tiger. The baroness remained mute and passive. Ginevra, calm and resolute, was waiting; she knew that the notary's voice was more powerful than her own, and so she seemed to have decided to be silent.

When Roguin stopped speaking, this scene became so terrifying, that the strange witnesses trembled; never, perhaps, had they been struck by such a silence.

The notaries looked at each other as if in consultation, rose, and went together to the window.

"Have you ever met such clients?" Roguin asked of his colleague.

"There is nothing to be drawn from them," replied the younger man. "In your place I should content myself with reading my deed. To me the old man does not seem assuming, he is furious, and you will gain nothing by insisting on *arguing* with him."

Monsieur Roguin read a stamped paper containing a report drawn up in advance, and coldly asked Bartolomeo for his reply.

"Then there are laws in France that destroy the paternal power?" asked the Corsican.

"Monsieur—" said Roguin in his honeyed voice.

"That snatch a daughter from her father?"

"Monsieur—"

"That deprive an old man of his last consolation?"

"Monsieur, your daughter only belongs to you—"

"That kill him?"

"Monsieur, allow me!"

Nothing is more ghastly than the composure and correct reasoning of notaries in the midst of the passionate scenes in which they are wont to intervene. The faces that Piombo looked upon seemed to him to have escaped from hell; when the quiet

and almost flute-like voice of his little antagonist uttered that fatal "Allow me!" his cold, concentrated rage knew no bounds. He seized a long dagger hanging on a nail over the chimney-piece and sprang upon his daughter. The youngest of the two notaries and one of the witnesses threw themselves between him and Ginevra; but Bartolomeo rudely overturned the two peacemakers, turning upon them a flaming face and blazing eyes which appeared more terrible than the dagger's brightness. When Ginevra found herself face to face with her father, she looked at him triumphantly, slowly approached him and knelt down.

"No! no! I could not," he said, flinging away his weapon so violently that it was embedded in the woodwork.

"Well, then, mercy! mercy!" she said. "You hesitate to give me death, and yet you refuse me life. Oh! father, never have I loved you so much. Grant me Luigi! I ask your consent on my knees; a daughter may humble herself before her father—. My Luigi! or I die!"

The violent excitement which was choking her prevented her from continuing and she lost her voice; her convulsive efforts showed plainly enough that she was between life and death. Bartolomeo harshly repulsed his daughter.

"Go," he said. "The wife of Luigi Porta could not be a Piombo. I have a daughter no longer! I have not the strength to curse you; but I renounce you, and you have a father no more. My Ginevra

Piombo is buried here," he cried in a deep voice, tightly pressing his heart.—"So leave! wretched girl," he added after a moment's silence, "leave! and never appear before me again!"

Then he took Ginevra's arm and silently led her out of the house.

"Luigi!" cried Ginevra, entering the modest apartment where the young officer was, "my Luigi, we have no other fortune than our love."

"We are richer than all the kings of the earth!" he replied.

"My father and mother have abandoned me," she said with deep sadness.

"I will love you for them."

"Then we shall be very happy?" she cried with a gaiety that was somewhat ghastly.

"Always!" he answered, pressing her to his heart.

*

The day after Ginevra left her father's house, she went to beg Madame Servin to give her shelter and her protection until the time fixed by the law for her marriage with Luigi Porta. Then began for her the apprenticeship to those sorrows that society spreads round those who do not follow its customs. Very much vexed at the blame Ginevra had brought upon her husband, Madame Servin received the fugitive coldly, and informed her in a few polite, guarded words that she must not count upon her support. Too proud to persist, but astonished at an egotism to which she was not accustomed, the young Corsican went to the lodging-house which was nearest to the house in which Luigi lived. The son of the Portas came and spent all his days at his future wife's feet; his youthful love, and the purity of his words, dispelled the clouds that the paternal disapproval gathered on the banished girl's forehead, and he would paint such a beautiful future, that she finished by smiling, without, however, forgetting the harshness of her parents. One morning, the servant of the house brought Ginevra several trunks which contained materials, linens, and a host of things necessary to a young wife setting up a household; in this present she recognized a mother's prudent kindness; for, upon examining these gifts, she found a purse in which the baroness had put the

sum belonging to her daughter, adding to it the fruits of her economy. The money was accompanied by a letter in which the mother besought the daughter to abandon her fatal contemplation of marriage, if there were yet time; she had been obliged, she said, to take unheard-of precautions in getting this slight help to Ginevra; she begged her not to accuse her of unkindness, if, in course of time she left her to neglect, she feared she would be unable to help her, she blessed her, and wished her happiness in this fatal marriage, if she insisted upon it, whilst assuring her that her thoughts were only with her beloved daughter. At this part, tears had obliterated several words of the letter.

"Oh! mother!" cried Ginevra, entirely relenting.

She felt a longing to throw herself on her knees, to see her and breathe the genial air of the paternal home; she was on the point of rushing out, when Luigi came in; she looked at him, and her filial tenderness vanished, her tears dried, and she felt she had not strength enough to forsake such an unfortunate and affectionate youth. To be the only hope of a noble creature, to love and yet desert him—this sacrifice was a treachery of which youthful hearts are incapable. Ginevra had the generosity to bury her misery in the depths of her heart.

At last, the wedding day arrived. Ginevra had nobody with her. Luigi took advantage of the time she was dressing to go and find the witnesses necessary to the signature of their marriage

certificate. These witnesses were worthy folk. The one, formerly a quartermaster in the hussars, had, whilst in the army, laid himself under obligations to Luigi, which are never blotted out of an honest man's heart; he had set up as a livery stableman and owned several cabs. The other, a master-mason, was landlord of the house in which the newly-married couple were to live. Each of them took a friend, then all four came with Luigi to fetch the bride. Unaccustomed to social humbug, and looking upon the service they were rendering Luigi as a matter of course, these people had dressed neatly, but quietly, and nothing betrayed a merry wedding procession.

Ginevra herself was dressed very simply, so as to be in keeping with her means; nevertheless, her beauty was somehow so noble and striking, that, at sight of her the words died away on the lips of the witnesses, who had thought themselves bound to pay her some compliment; they greeted her respectfully and she bowed; they looked at her in silence and could only admire her. This reserve threw a chill over them all. Joy can only burst out amongst people who feel they are equals. So chance ordained that all around the fiancés should be gloomy and solemn; nothing reflected their happiness. The church and mayoralty were not very far from the hotel. The two Corsicans, followed by the four witnesses prescribed by the law, would go there on foot, in a simplicity that stripped this great scene in social life of all display. In the yard of the mayoralty they found a crowd of carriages which meant a

numerous company; they went up and came to a great hall where the wedding couples, whose happiness was appointed for that day, were waiting somewhat impatiently for the mayor of the district. Ginevra sat down close to Luigi at the end of a big bench, and their witnesses, for want of seats, stood up. Two brides, gorgeously dressed in white, covered with bouquets of orange blossom whose satin buds quivered beneath their veils, were surrounded by their joyful families, and accompanied by their mothers, whom they looked at with alternate glances of satisfaction and timidity; all eyes reflected their happiness, and every face seemed to lavish blessings upon them. Fathers, witnesses, brothers and sisters all came and went like a swarm of bees disporting themselves in a vanishing ray of sunshine. Each one seemed to understand the value of this fleeting moment when, in life, the heart finds itself torn between two hopes; the longing for the past, and the promises of the future. At sight of all this, Ginevra felt her heart swelling, and she pressed Luigi's arm, who looked at her. Tears swam in the young Corsican's eyes, he never understood better than at that moment all that his Ginevra was sacrificing for him. These precious tears caused the young girl to forget her desertion. Love shed treasures of light between the two lovers, so that they no longer saw anything but their own selves in the midst of this confusion; they were there, alone in this crowd, such as they were to be through life. Their

witnesses, regardless of ceremony, were chatting quietly about their affairs.

"Oats are very dear," the quartermaster was saying to the mason.

"Not so much so as plaster, making all allowance," replied the contractor.

And they took a turn round the hall.

"How they waste time here!" cried the mason, returning a big silver watch to his pocket.

Luigi and Ginevra, crowded close together, seemed to be but one person. Indeed, a poet would have admired these two heads united by the same feeling, colored alike, both sad and silent in the presence of two buzzing wedding parties, before four riotous families, glittering with diamonds and flowers, and whose gaiety had something transient about it. All the joy shown outwardly by these noisy, resplendent groups, Luigi and Ginevra buried in the depth of their hearts. On the one hand, the vulgar uproar of pleasure; on the other, the delicate silence of joyful souls: earth and heaven. But the trembling Ginevra could not entirely divest herself of a woman's weaknesses. Superstitious, like all Italians, she would see an omen in this contrast, and a feeling of terror, as unconquerable as that of her love, kept hold of her heart. All of a sudden, a porter in the town livery opened a double swing door; all were silent, and his voice resounded like a shout as he called Monsieur Luigi da Porta and Mademoiselle Ginevra di Piombo. This moment caused the two lovers some embarrassment.

The fame of the name of Piombo attracted attention, the spectators looked for a wedding that, it seemed, ought to have been sumptuous. Ginevra rose, her glance of withering pride awed the whole crowd, she took Luigi's arm and proceeded with a firm step, followed by her witnesses. An increasing murmur of astonishment and general whispering reminded Ginevra that the world was asking an account of her parents' absence; the paternal curse seemed to be pursuing her.

"Wait for the families," said the mayor to the clerk, who was promptly beginning to read the deeds.

"The father and mother protest," phlegmatically replied the secretary.

"On both sides?" rejoined the mayor.

"The bridegroom is an orphan."

"Where are the witnesses?"

"Here they are," again replied the secretary, pointing to the four motionless, silent men, who, with folded arms, looked like statues.

"But if there is a protestation?" said the mayor.

"The necessary legal requirements have been complied with," replied the clerk getting up to hand over to the functionary the documents annexed to the marriage certificate.

There was something degrading in this official discussion and it contained a whole history in very few words. The hatred of the Porta and the Piombo, and terrible passions were inscribed on a page of the civil register, as the annals of a people

are graven in a few lines, or even in one word on the headstone of a grave: Robespierre or Napoléon. Ginevra trembled. Like the dove, who in crossing the seas, only had the ark on which to set her feet, she could only turn her gaze into Luigi's eyes, for all was dreary and cold around her. The mayor wore an air of severe disapproval, and his clerk looked at the couple with malicious curiosity. Never did anything appear less like a fête. Like all things in human life when stripped of their accessories, it was an act simple in itself, but infinite in thought. After several questions that the bride and bridegroom answered, after the mayor had mumbled several words, and after affixing their signatures to the register, Luigi and Ginevra were united. The two young Corsicans,—whose union held all the poetry perpetuated by genius in that of Romeo and Juliet,—walked through two rows of joyful relations to whom they did not belong, and were almost impatient over the delay caused by this seemingly mournful marriage. When the young girl found herself in the yard of the mayoralty and under the sky, a sigh burst from her bosom.

"Oh! can a whole life of care and love requite my Ginevra's courage and tenderness?" said Luigi.

At these words accompanied by tears of joy, the bride forgot all her sufferings; for she had suffered in facing the world to claim a happiness that her family refused to sanction.

"Why do men come between us?" she said with a simplicity of feeling that delighted Luigi.

Pleasure gave buoyancy to the married couple. They saw neither sky, nor earth, nor houses, and flew as if with wings toward the church. At last they reached a gloomy little chapel and stood before a quiet altar where an old priest celebrated their union. There, as at the mayoralty, they were surrounded by the two wedding parties whose noise had so worried them. The church, filled with friends and relations, re-echoed with the noise made by the carriages, the beadles, the porters and the priests. The altars blazed with every ecclesiastical luxury, the wreaths of orange blossoms decking the statues of the Virgin seemed to be new. One saw nothing but flowers, glittering tapers and velvet, gold embroidered cushions, while delicious perfumes surrounded them. God seemed to smile upon this joy of a day. When it was necessary to hold over Luigi's and Ginevra's heads the symbol of eternal union, the soft, shining white satin yoke, light for some, and of lead for most, the priest looked, but in vain, for the youths who fill this glad office; they were replaced by two of the witnesses. The ecclesiastic hastily gave the married couple an address upon the perils of life and the duties that they would one day have to teach their children; and, whilst on this subject, he insinuated an indirect reproach upon the absence of Ginevra's parents; then, after having joined them before God, as the mayor had united them before the law, he finished his mass and left them.

"God bless them!" said Vergniaud to the mason

under the church porch. "Never were two creatures better made for each other. That girl's parents are idiots. I know no braver soldier than Colonel Louis! If everyone had behaved as he did, *the other* would still be here."

The soldier's blessing, the only one that had been given them that day, shed balm on Ginevra's heart. They separated in clasping each other's hands, and Luigi cordially thanked his landlord.

"Good-bye, my brave fellow," said Luigi to the quartermaster, "I thank you."

"You are welcome, colonel—soul, self, horses and carriages, all that I have is at your disposal."

"How he loves you!" said Ginevra.

Luigi eagerly hurried his bride to the house they were to occupy; they soon gained their modest apartment; and there, when the door was shut, Luigi took his wife in his arms, crying:

"Oh! my Ginevra! for now you are mine—here is our true fête. Here," he continued, "everything will smile upon us."

Together they went through the three rooms which formed their home. The first room served as drawing-room and dining-room. On the right was a bedroom, to the left a big closet that Luigi had arranged for his dear wife and where she found easels, paint-boxes, plaster casts, models, lay figures, pictures, portfolios, in short, all the artist's property.

"Then I shall work there," she said with childish expression.

For a long time she looked at the hangings, the

furniture, and was ever turning to Luigi to thank him, for there was a kind of magnificence about this little habitation; a book shelf contained Ginevra's favorite books, and at the further end was a piano.

She sat down on a divan, drew Luigi beside her, and squeezing his hand:

"You have good taste," she said caressingly.

"Your words make me very happy," he said.

"But let us see everything," demanded Ginevra, to whom Luigi had made a mystery of the decorations of this retreat.

They then went towards a nuptial chamber, fresh and white as a virgin.

"Oh! come out!" said Luigi, laughing.

"But I want to see everything."

And the imperious Ginevra inspected the furniture with the inquisitive attention of an antiquary examining a medal; she touched the silks and reviewed everything with the naive satisfaction of a young bride displaying the riches of her wedding presents.

"We are beginning by ruining ourselves," she said, with an air half glad, half sorrowful.

"That's true! all the arrears of my pay are there," replied Luigi, "I sold them to an honest man called Gigonnet."

"Why?" she rejoined in a reproachful tone mixed with secret satisfaction. "Do you think I would be less happy in an attic? But," she continued, "all this is very pretty and belongs to us."

Luigi was contemplating her with so much rapture, that she lowered her gaze and said:

"Let us go and see the rest."

Above these three rooms, under the roof, was a study for Luigi, a kitchen and a servant's bedroom. Ginevra was content with her little domain, although the view was limited by the large wall of a neighboring house, and the courtyard that gave them light was gloomy. But the two lovers were so glad of heart, and hope gilded their future so well, that they would see nothing but delightful imagery in their mysterious abode. They were in a corner of this enormous house and lost in the immensity of Paris like two pearls in their shell, in the bosom of a deep sea; to anyone else it would have been a prison, to them it was a paradise. The first days of their union were given up to love. They found it too hard to devote themselves all at once to work, and they could not resist the spell of their rightful passion. Luigi lay whole hours at his wife's feet, admiring the color of her hair, the shape of her forehead, the delightful setting of her eyes, the purity and whiteness of the two arches under which they slowly glided in expressing the joy of satisfied love. Ginevra stroked her Luigi's hair, never tired of contemplating, according to one of her own expressions, this young man's *beltà folgorante,* and the delicacy of his features; ever fascinated by the dignity of his manners, as she always fascinated him by the gracefulness of hers. They played like children with trifles, these trifles always led them back to their passion, and they only ceased their play to sink into dreams of *far niente.* An air that

Ginevra sang would reproduce the delicious transitions of their love. Then, linking their steps as they had joined their souls, they would scour the fields finding their love wherever they went, in the flowers, and skies, and in the heart of the fiery tints of the setting sun; they even read it in the fitful clouds that wavered in the breeze. Two days were never alike, their love increased because it was genuine. In a very few days they had tested each other, and had instinctively recognized that their minds were those whose inexhaustible riches always seem to promise fresh delights in the future. It was love in all its simplicity, with its interminable chats, its unfinished sentences, its long silences, its oriental repose and passion. Luigi and Ginevra understood all there was in love. Is not love like the sea, which, when seen superficially or hastily, is declared by common souls to be monotonous, whilst certain privileged beings can pass their lives admiring it, constantly discovering changing phenomena which delight them?

However, very soon, prudence came to drag the young bride and bridegroom from their Eden; it was necessary that they should work to live. Ginevra, who possessed a peculiar talent for imitating old pictures, set to work to make copies and formed a connection amongst the dealers. Luigi, on his side, very energetically sought occupation, but it was very difficult for a young officer, whose whole talents were confined to a thorough knowledge of stratagem, to find employment in Paris. At last, one day when

tired of his useless efforts, he was in despair at seeing that the burden of their existence was entirely falling upon Ginevra, he bethought himself of turning his handwriting, which was very good, to account. Following the example of his wife's perseverance, he went and applied to all the solicitors, notaries, and lawyers in Paris. The frankness of his manners, and his position, interested them deeply in his behalf, and he obtained sufficient copying to be obliged to have the help of young men. By degrees he undertook writings on a large scale. The proceeds from this office, and from Ginevra's pictures, finished by placing the young household in such easy circumstances that they were proud, for it all proceeded from their industry. It was the happiest moment of their lives. The days sped rapidly between business and the delights of love. In the evenings, after having worked hard, they loved to find themselves in Ginevra's cell. Music comforted them for all their fatigues. No expression of sadness came to darken the young wife's features, and she never allowed herself to complain. She could always appear to Luigi with a smile and beaming eyes. Both fostered one predominant thought which would have helped them to find pleasure in the roughest labor; Ginevra said to herself that she was working for Luigi, and Luigi for Ginevra. Sometimes, in her husband's absence, the young wife would think of the perfect happiness that she might have had, if this life of love had been spent beside her father and mother; she would then fall into a

deep melancholy in experiencing the power of remorse; gloomy scenes would pass like shadows in her imagination; she would see her old father alone, or her mother crying in the evenings and concealing her tears from the relentless Piombo; these two white, grave heads would suddenly uprise before her, and it seemed to her that she was never to see them but in the fantastic light of memory. This idea haunted her like a presentiment. She celebrated the anniversary of their wedding by giving her husband a portrait he had often wished for, that of his Ginevra. Never had the young artist produced anything so remarkable. Apart from the perfect likeness, the splendor of her beauty, the purity of her feelings, and the happiness of love, were there reproduced as if by magic. The masterpiece was inaugurated. They passed yet another year in the midst of plenty. The history of their lives could then be told in three words: THEY WERE HAPPY. No event worthy of interest then happened to them.

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In the beginning of the winter of 1819, the picture dealers advised Ginevra to give them something else than copies, for, on account of the competition, they could no longer sell them at a profit. Madame Porta recognized the mistake she had made in not practising painting genre pictures which would have gained her a name, and she undertook to paint portraits, but she had to contend against a crowd of artists still less rich than herself. However, as Luigi and Ginevra had saved some money, they did not despair of the future. At the end of the winter of this same year, Luigi worked without intermission. He also contended against competitors; the price of copying was so much lower, that he could no longer employ anybody, and found he was obliged to devote more time than heretofore to his work in order to earn the same amount.

His wife had finished several pictures that were not without merit; but the dealers scarcely bought those of artists of reputation. Ginevra offered them at insignificant prices without succeeding in selling them. The position of this household was something appalling; the souls of husband and wife were full of happiness, love overwhelmed them with its treasures, and poverty rose up like a skeleton in the midst of this harvest of pleasure, and they hid their anxieties from each other. At the time when Ginevra felt herself near crying at seeing her Luigi

suffer, she would cover him with caresses. In the same way Luigi hid a gloomy sorrow in his heart when expressing the tenderest love for Ginevra. They sought compensation for their misfortunes, in the exaltation of their sentiment, and their words, their joys and their amusements were impregnated with a kind of frenzy. They were afraid for the future. What feeling is there whose strength can be compared to that of a passion that must cease on the morrow, killed by death or by want? When they spoke of their poverty, they felt the necessity of deceiving one another, and seized the least hope with equal eagerness. One night, Ginevra looked in vain beside her for Luigi, and got up thoroughly frightened. A faint light reflected on the dark wall of the little courtyard told her that her husband was working during the night. Luigi would wait until his wife was asleep before going up to his study. Four o'clock struck, Ginevra lay down again and pretended to be asleep; Luigi returned overcome with fatigue and sleep, and Ginevra sorrowfully gazed at the beautiful face which was already furrowed with work and anxiety.

"It is for my sake that he spends the nights writing," she said, crying.

A sudden idea dried her tears. She thought she would imitate Luigi. That very day, she went to a rich dealer in engravings, and, by the help of a letter of recommendation to the merchant, given her by Élie Magus, one of her picture dealers, she obtained a contract for coloring. During the day, she painted

and busied herself with household cares; then, when the night came, she colored engravings. So these two enamored beings only sought their nuptial bed to leave it. Both pretended to sleep, and from devotion left one another as soon as each had deceived the other. One night, Luigi, succumbing to a kind of fever caused by the heavy work under which he was beginning to give way, opened the window of his study to inhale the pure morning air and throw off his sorrows, when, upon lowering his eyes, he saw the light thrown on to the wall by Ginevra's lamp; the wretched man guessed all, he went down, stepping softly, and surprised his wife in the midst of her studio, illuminating engravings.

"Oh! Ginevra!" he cried.

She started convulsively in her chair and blushed.

"Could I sleep whilst you were exhausting yourself with fatigue?" she said.

"But I alone have the right to work in this way."

"How could I remain idle," replied the young wife, the tears rising to her eyes, "when I know that every piece of bread almost costs us a drop of your blood? I should die if I did not unite my efforts to yours. Shall we not share everything between us, pleasures as well as pains?"

"She is cold!" cried Luigi in despair. "Wrap your shawl closer over your chest, my Ginevra; the night is damp and cold."

They both went to the window, the young wife leaning her head on her beloved's breast, his arm round her waist, and both, buried in profound

silence, looked at the sky that the dawn was slowly lighting. Gray shaded clouds quickly succeeded each other, and the east grew lighter and lighter.

"Do you see?" said Ginevra, "it is an omen; we shall be happy."

"Yes, in Heaven," answered Luigi with a bitter smile. "Oh! Ginevra, you who deserve all the treasures of the earth—"

"I have your heart," she said with an accent of joy.

"Oh! I am not complaining," he rejoined, pressing her tightly to him. And he kissed the delicate face that was beginning to lose the bloom of youth, but which had such a tender, sweet expression, that he never could look at it without being comforted.

"What a silence!" said Ginevra. "Dear one, I find great pleasure in staying up. The majesty of night is indeed infectious, it awes and inspires one; there is an indefinable power in this idea: everyone is asleep and I watch."

"Oh! my Ginevra, to-day is not the first time that I feel how delicately graceful your mind is! But here is the dawn; come and sleep."

"Yes," she replied, "if I do not sleep alone. I did suffer the night I found my Luigi was sitting up without me!"

The courage with which these two young people contended against misfortune had its reward for a time; but the event which nearly always crowns the happiness of most households was to be fatal to them; Ginevra had a son, who, to use a popular expression, was *as beautiful as the day*.

The feeling of maternity redoubled the young wife's spirits. Luigi borrowed to provide for the expenses of Ginevra's confinement. So, at first, she did not feel all the discomfort of her position, and husband and wife gave themselves up to the happiness of rearing a child. It was their last happiness. Like two swimmers who unite their efforts to break a current, the two Corsicans at first struggled bravely; but sometimes they yielded to an apathy similar to the sleep which precedes death, and very soon they were obliged to sell their jewels. Poverty suddenly showed herself, not hideous, but simply clothed, and almost easy to bear; her voice had nothing terrifying, she did not drag despair, or spectres, or rags after her; but she drove away the recollection and customs of comfort; she wore away the elasticity of pride. Then came misery in all its horror, unmindful of its tatters, and trampling human feeling under foot. Seven or eight months after the birth of little Bartolomeo, one would have hardly recognized in the mother nursing this sickly child, the original of the admirable portrait, the only ornament of a bare room. Without fire in a severe winter, Ginevra saw the graceful outlines of her face slowly fading, her cheek grew as white as porcelain, and her eyes as dim as if the springs of life were drying up within her. Seeing her emaciated, colorless child, she only suffered from this youthful misery, and Luigi no longer had the heart to smile at his son.

"I have been all over Paris," he said in a hollow voice, "I know nobody, and how can I venture to

ask from outsiders? Vergniaud, the cow-keeper, my old gipsy, is implicated in a conspiracy, he has been put in prison, and, besides, he has lent me all that he could part with. As to our landlord, he has asked us nothing for a year."

"But we do not need anything," replied Ginevra gently, assuming a calm expression.

"Every day that comes brings more difficulty," rejoined Luigi with terror.

Luigi took all Ginevra's pictures, the portrait, and several pieces of furniture that the household could still go without, he sold them all for a small sum, and, for a little time the amount he obtained prolonged the agony of the family. In these days of adversity, Ginevra proved the sublimeness of her character, and the extent of her resignation, she bore stoically the attacks of misery; her energetic mind supported her under all evils, she worked with faltering hand beside her dying son, despatched the household duties with miraculous activity, and attended to everything. She even felt happy again when she saw Luigi's smile of astonishment at sight of the cleanliness that prevailed in the one room they had taken refuge in.

"Sweetheart, I kept this piece of bread for you," she said to him one night when he came in tired.

"And you?"

"I have had dinner, dear Luigi, I do not want anything."

And the sweet expression of her face urged him still more than did her words to accept the food of

which she was depriving herself. Luigi kissed her with one of those despairing kisses that were given in 1793 by friends when they were mounting the scaffold together. At these supreme moments, two beings see each other heart to heart. So the wretched Luigi, suddenly understanding that his wife was starving, shared in the fever that was devouring her; he shivered, and went out on the pretext of pressing business, for he would rather have taken the deadliest poison than shirk death by eating the last piece of bread they had. He proceeded to wander about Paris, amongst the most brilliant carriages, in the midst of the taunting luxury that blazes everywhere; he quickly passed by the shops of the money-changers where the gold was glistening; he finally resolved to sell himself, to offer himself as a substitute for military service, hoping that this sacrifice might save Ginevra, and that, during his absence, Bartolomeo might take her into favor again. So he went to find one of those men who carry on the *white* slave trade, and he felt a kind of happiness in recognizing an old officer of the Imperial Guard.

"I have eaten nothing for two days," he said to him in a slow, weak voice, "my wife is dying of hunger and never complains to me, I believe she would die smiling. For pity's sake, my friend," he added with a bitter smile, "buy me in advance, I am strong, I am no longer in the service, and I—"

The officer gave Luigi a sum on account of the amount he undertook to procure. The poor wretch

laughed convulsively when he held a handful of gold coins, he ran with all his might to his house, breathless, and crying from time to time:

"Oh! Ginevra! my Ginevra!"

It was growing dusk when he reached home. He entered softly, for fear of giving his wife, whom he had left very weak, too great a shock. The sun's last rays in penetrating through the window expired on Ginevra's face, she was asleep, sitting in a chair with her child upon her bosom.

"Wake up, my heart," he said, without noticing the position of the child, who was at that moment extraordinarily bright.

Hearing his voice, the poor mother opened her eyes, met Luigi's look and smiled; but Luigi give a cry of dismay; he hardly recognized his wife, who became half crazy when, with a gesture of fierce energy he showed her the gold. Ginevra began to laugh mechanically, and all of a sudden she cried in a terrible voice:

"Louis, the child is cold!"

She looked at her son and fainted; the little Barthélemy was dead.

Luigi took his wife in his arms, without removing the child whom she held clasped with extraordinary strength; and, after having laid her on the bed, he went out to call for help.

"Oh! mon Dieu!" he said to his landlord, whom he met on the stairs, "I have gold and my child is dead of hunger! his mother is dying, help us!"

He returned like a madman to his wife, and left

the honest mason busy, with several neighbors collecting all that might mitigate a state of misery which, till then, had remained unknown, so carefully had the two Corsicans hid it, through a feeling of pride. Luigi had thrown his gold upon the floor, and was kneeling at the head of the bed where his wife was lying.

"Father, take care of my son, he bears your name!" cried Ginevra in her delirium.

"Oh! my angel, be still," said Luigi, kissing her; "happy days are in store for us."

This voice and caress restored her to some degree of tranquillity.

"Oh! my Louis!" she replied looking at him with strange fixity, "listen well to me. I feel that I am dying. My death is natural, I suffered too much, and then so great a happiness as mine had to be paid for. Yes, my Luigi, be comforted. I have been so happy, that, if I were to begin life again, I should still accept our destiny. I am a bad mother; I regret you still more than I regret the child— My child!" she added in a deep voice.

Two tears fell from her dying eyes, and she suddenly pressed the corpse that she had not been able to warm.

"Give my hair to my father, in memory of his Ginevra," she continued. "Tell him that I never accused him—"

Her head fell back upon her husband's arm.

"No! you must not die!" cried Luigi. "The doctor is coming. We have bread. Your father

will forgive you. Prosperity has dawned for us. Stay with us, angel of beauty!"

But the faithful, loving heart was growing cold. Ginevra instinctively turned her eyes toward him whom she adored, though she was conscious of nothing; confused images clouded her spirit, about to lose all recollection of this earth. She knew that Luigi was there, for she tightened her hold of his icy hand, and seemed as if she wanted to cling above a precipice that she thought she was falling into.

"Sweetheart," she said at last, "you are cold, I will warm you."

She tried to put her husband's hand upon her heart, and she died.

Two doctors, a priest, and the neighbors came in just then, bringing all that was necessary to save the husband and wife and quiet their despair. At first, the strangers made a great noise; but, when they came in, a ghastly silence reigned in the room.

Whilst this scene was taking place, Bartolomeo and his wife were sitting in their old-fashioned arm-chairs, each in a corner of the huge fireplace, in which the glowing fire was hardly sufficient to warm the immense drawing-room of their house. The clock pointed to midnight. For a long time the old couple had been unable to sleep. At this moment, they were as silent as two old people who had fallen into their dotage, and who look at everything and see nothing. Their empty drawing-room, full of

memories for them, was dimly lighted by a single lamp on the verge of going out. But for the flickering firelight, they would have been in perfect darkness. One of their friends had just left them, and the chair upon which he had been sitting during his visit was between the two Corsicans. Piombo had already looked more than once at this chair, and his thoughtful glances chased each other like the stings of remorse, for the empty chair was Ginevra's. Elisa Piombo watched the expressions passing over her husband's white face. Although she was accustomed to guessing the Corsican's feeling according to the changing motions of his features, they were alternately so threatening and so sorrowful, that she could not read this unfathomable mind.

Was Bartolomeo yielding to the powerful memories awakened by this chair? Was he shocked to see that a stranger had used it for the first time since his daughter's departure? Had the hour of his mercy sounded, that hour so vainly awaited until now?

These reflections in turn agitated Elisa Piombo's heart. For a moment her husband's face became so terrible that she trembled at having dared make use of so simple an artifice to create an opportunity to speak of Ginevra. Just then the blast swept the snowflakes so violently against the shutters that the old couple could hear its light rustle. Ginevra's mother lowered her head to hide her tears from her husband. Suddenly a sigh burst from the old man's bosom; his wife looked at him, he had broken down;

she ventured, for the second time in three years, to speak to him of his daughter.

"If Ginevra were cold!" she cried softly.

Piombo started.

"Perhaps she is hungry!" she continued.

The Corsican shed a tear.

"She has a child and cannot nurse it, her milk is dry," resumed the mother eagerly in an accent of despair.

"Let her come! let her come!" cried Piombo, "Oh! my darling child! you have conquered me!"

The mother rose as if to go and seek her child. At that moment the door opened with a crash, and a man whose face was no longer human suddenly appeared before them.

"Dead!—Our two families had to exterminate each other, for there is all that remains of her," he said, laying Ginevra's long, black hair upon the table.

The old couple shuddered as if they had been struck by lightning, and no longer saw Luigi.

"He spares us a shot, for he is dead!" cried Bartolomeo slowly, looking down upon the ground.

Paris, January, 1830.

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